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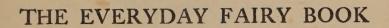
ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

Pictured by JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH



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Uniform with this Volume

THE NOW-A-DAYS FAIRY BOOK

By ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

With Illustrations in Colour by JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH. 160 pages.

THE EVERYDAY FAIRY BOOK

ANNA ALICE CHAPIN

Author of "Humpty Dumpty" "The Now-a-days Fairy Book" etc.

With Illustrations in Colour
By JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH

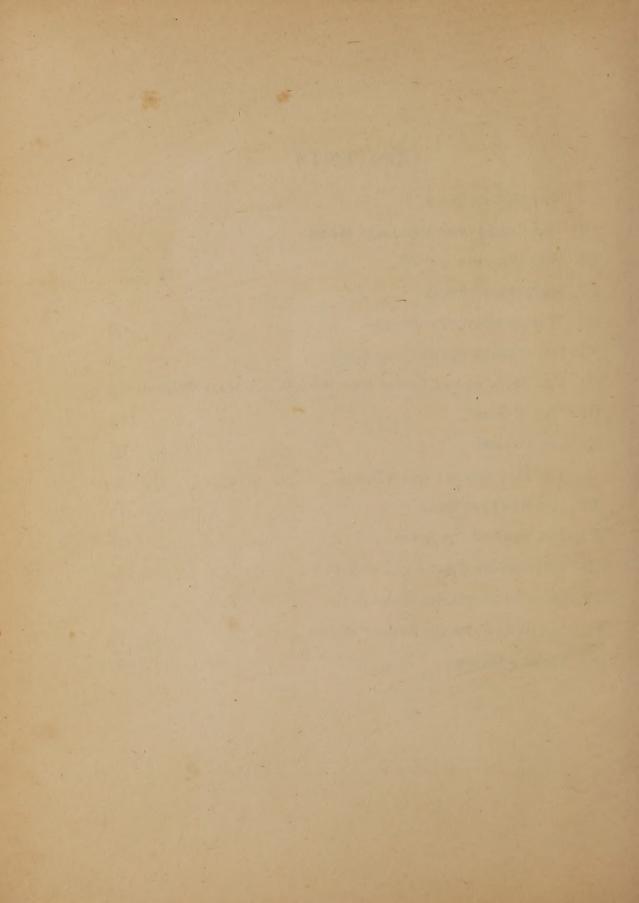


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Ever since he had been a little, little boy, he had thought what fun it would be if Jack should pop up and cry: "Hello,	
Frank!" Frontisp	riece
She came down from the platform, still bravely choking back her tears.	FACING PAGE
She knew she could eat one whenever she wanted to, so she was in no hurry	
She was sitting in the hammock, trying to amuse herself with an old Atlas and not succeeding at all well	
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THE CHILDREN'S PLAYTIME

When the lamp is shining
On the nursery floor,
When the wind is whining
Softly at the door;
When the hound begins to bay,
And the long day ends,
When the wicked Nightmares neigh,
I will creep from bed and play
With my Shadow Friends.

I must look and listen;
I must take great care;
See the starlight glisten!
Hear the creaking stair!
Through the dark, with footstep light;
None can hear or see!
Hush! They must not have a fright,
The Shadow Folk that come by night
To dance and play with me.

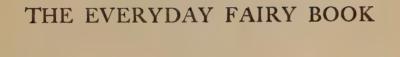
Look behind the steeple:

The laughing moon shines red;
All the Grown Up People
Safe are tucked in bed.

What, I wonder, would they say,
If you told them true?

Little do they guess by day
That friendly Shadows come and play
With Us the whole night through!





I'm very glad there is a wall
About my garden sweet;
I do not think I'd like at all
To look right at the street;
It's nice to hear the footsteps fall,
But not to watch the feet.

I hear the horses canter by,
I hear men shout and run,
I hear such lots of sounds, and try
To guess what's being done:
I guess, and guess, and guess, and—My!
It's such exciting fun!

I do not want to truly know
The ones who sing or call,—
The real folk who come and go
Don't interest me at all;
I like to play that things are so:—
I'm glad I have a wall!

Pretending.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GARDEN WALL

RANK was very little when he first began to try to find the way into Fairyland.

Have you ever hunted for it too? I have. Of course, one knows that it is somewhere about, but, oddly enough, nobody has ever described it so that one can recognise it at once, on first sight. And no one has ever drawn any plan, or map, or chart, or diagram, or whatever it should be called, to show the quickest way to discover it. All we can be sure of is that everybody knows when it is found.

It may, for all we know, be a hollow tree, or a golden gate, or a rabbit hole (like Alice's), or a river (like the one in "Water Babies"), or a tiny crack in the bricks of the fireplace, or all of these and more; for I have an idea that there are a great many paths, and roads, and gates, and doors, and entrances generally, that lead into Fairyland.

Frank had tried many ways, and he had been badly disappointed each time. There was a funny little door at the darkest end of the hall upstairs, high up from the floor. Frank was sure it must be a Fairy door, for it was far too small for any human creature to go through, and, so far as he knew, neither Inky nor Cotton, the cats, were very good at opening and shutting doors. Besides, it was too high for them.

He climbed upon a chair, and got it unlatched after a while, and he could hardly wait to see what was inside. He had to climb down and bring a stubby scrap of candle-end, and light it, and climb back again. And when he looked in, there was nothing to be seen but a lot of wires and things! He sat down on the chair, blew out the candle, and blinked to keep from crying.

Nurse came down the hall just then, and saw him.

"Bless me, Master Frankie, dear!" she cried. "Whatever are you doing there? And what's wrong with you, love?"

Frank pointed dismally to the wires.

"What are they?" he asked.

"Them? Why, honey, they're just the wires for the electric lights and bells all over the house! The door's there so they can be looked at now and then, to—"

But Frank did not hear the rest of her explanation. He got off the

chair and wandered off forlornly. He had been so certain that it must be a Fairy door!

Auntie Sue called to him from her room. She was a sweet-looking Auntie, with snow-white hair and a young face, and beautiful grey eyes. She and Frank had no one but each other in the world, and they loved each other very much.

"I want a Fairy story, please," said Frank, wistfully, as he stood beside her chair. It seemed to him that only a Fairy story could really comfort him to-day.

"Let me see," said Auntie Sue, who always tried to do what he asked, whether she felt like it or not, "what shall it be about? A Princess, or a Dragon, or a Goblin, or—"

Frank shook his head.

"I think I should like it to be about a little boy," he said. It seemed to him that even to hear about another little boy would be rather nice; he didn't know any real ones—not any at all.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said Auntie Sue; "we'll take the pussy-cats, and go out into the garden; and after we've looked at the vines and things to be sure that they are all right, we'll sit out there, and I'll try to think of a story about a little boy."

So she carried Cotton, the big white cat, and Frank carried Inky, the little black one, and they all four went out of doors into the lovely May afternoon.

I must stop just here to explain that Frank was not a very strong little boy. When he was quite a baby he had had a bad fall, and it had hurt his back, so that he was rather round-shouldered, and could not walk so easily nor so fast as other children. That was why, so far, he had not gone to school, and also why he had no playmates. He could not run, nor play games, nor skip rope, nor skate, nor frolic about, though he was not really lame. And that, too, was why Auntie Sue was never tired of inventing new ways to please and amuse him.

The Doctor-Man—such a funny little Doctor-Man, with a fierce, bristly white moustache, and cross grey eyes, and the kindest heart in the world!—often said: "It's as much a matter of nerves and head as of body. If the little chap can be kept happy and interested he stands a good chance of getting well and strong."

But the trouble was that nothing much interested the "little chap"—nothing except what most persons call nonsense. Fairies always interested

him greatly, as you already know. They seemed quiet creatures from what he had heard of them from Auntie Sue,—and he imagined that they would be nice to "mis'able" little boys. "Mis'able" was one of Frank's favourite words. It seemed exactly to describe his feelings—the feelings in his mind as well as those in his weak little body.

Frank was small for his age, and it wasn't a very great age anyway,—ten last birthday. He had brown hair and eyes, and strangers always said that he was the sort of child who must look like his mother! Auntie Sue never spoke of his mother or his father either. He only knew that they had both gone away to Heaven while he was still a baby, and that there wasn't any one in the world belonging to him except Auntie Sue.

Their garden was a very nice one, and Frank loved it, though it was just a wee bit too prim and neat. You see his aunt had planned it and planted it and taken care of it, and she was very particular about things. Everything had to be just so; and of course it was a right and proper and pleasant "just so," but sometimes hard to live up to. She was always so careful of Frank, and his clothes, and his sore throats, and his meals, and all those things, that once in a while he felt like giving a tiny-weeny sigh. It was rather tiring to have to always think what you were doing!

But then, he said to himself, the dearest Aunties in the world had to be a little like that, and I suppose he was right. Auntie Sue was so afraid she would not take as good care of him as his own mother would have if she had lived, that she took care of him almost too hard!

But, as I have said before, it was a very nice garden. In their various seasons, there were all sorts of bright-coloured flowers and green things, growing just where they should grow: the gladioli and daisies and nasturtiums and pansies in the sun, and the fuchsias and ferns and other damp-loving plants in the shade. And the garden wall—

I hope if you ever have to spend most of your time shut up in a garden, that you will have a wall like the one around Frank's. In the first place, it was lovely just to look at, all covered with vines and creepers and ivy, and starred with morning glories, and clematis, and wistaria clusters, and Crimson Rambler roses, and the flowers of the trumpet vine. And every few days Auntie Sue and Frank would come out with the little library stepladder, and Auntie Sue would stand on the stepladder and snip off the dead leaves, and help the little new shoots to climb upward and spread out, and pat them affectionately as if they had all been alive!

And that was the least exciting part of the wall. The really thrilling

thing about it was that it was so high that you couldn't look over it; at least, Frank could not, for Auntie Sue was afraid to let him climb the ladder lest he should have another dreadful fall. And even from the top of their house there was nothing to be seen except roofs and chimneys and tree-tops that hid nearly everything.

Frank never asked her what could be seen from the top of the stepladder when one was looking directly over onto the other side; it was so much

better fun, you see, to imagine it!

For that is the very beginning and end of the beautiful game of Make-Believe: the not knowing whether what you play is really so or not!

Behind the wall on one side of the garden Frank could see two or three big apple-trees, and beyond them a grey shingled roof, not so high as the tops of the trees. The house must be a small one, he decided. The house where he and his aunt lived was big and square and white and solid-looking. It was very old, he knew, and sometimes people came to see it and talked admiringly about it to Auntie Sue.

There were benches under the locust trees in the garden, and Frank and his aunt sat down on one of them, and the two cats dashed off chasing the shadows of leaves, birds and butterflies,—even of clouds, for any sort of a shadow will do to play with if you are young and a cat.

"Listen!" said Auntie Sue.

The gayest sort of noises came from the Grey House (as Frank always called it) next door. Evidently there were children there, for one could plainly hear the shouts of laughter and running steps. Frank had heard the sounds often,—and sometimes a dog barking.

"They must have lots of friends," he said, "the little boys and girls who live there."

And he sighed softly. He hadn't any friends at all himself. Auntie Sue was afraid to have him play with other children; they were so rough, she felt, and he was so delicate. And she was also nervous about dogs. You see there were lots of hard things about being so carefully looked out for even by such a sweet Auntie as she was.

"They must have lots of friends!" he repeated, looking at the roof of the Grey House.

"Or else they're a very big family," suggested Auntie Sue.

Frank gave a sort of gasp of delight at the mere idea.

"Wouldn't that be wonderful?" he cried. "-To be a big family?"

Auntie Sue laughed at him.

"You couldn't be a big family, all by yourself!" she teased.

But she looked, and felt, troubled. She wondered if perhaps her darling nephew would be happier, after all, with other children, even if they were a bit rough in their ways. She hated to try it, and yet—

"Come!" she said briskly. "Let's see if we can't think of a story!"

Frank settled himself down to listen, and looked at her hopefully. Perhaps the story would cheer him up, though Auntie's stories were usually about the sort of things that didn't happen to ordinary little boys and girls. They were wonderful things, of course, but somehow not altogether real.

"Once upon a time," said Auntie Sue, "there was a little Prince who was the son of a great King, and who was to be a great King himself when he should grow up. The great King died when the Prince was still very small, and there were numbers of guardians, and regents, and chancellors, and chamberlains, and ministers, and tutors, and so on, to take care of him and to teach him how to be a King.

"He lived in a big palace, with ever so many servants to wait upon him, and ever so many men-at-arms—that is, soldiers, you know—to guard him. Though, for the matter of that, there was no need to guard him, for there was no one in his Kingdom who would have thought of harming him. His subjects were good faithful people, and they loved the little boy who was one day to be their King."

"Was he a well little boy?" asked Frank, gravely.

This was a question which always came up somewhere in the middle of every story, and Auntie Sue never quite knew which way he wanted her to answer it. So she sometimes said one thing and sometimes the other, in order to be on the safe side at least part of the time, and this time she said that the Prince was not a very strong little boy, and that his name was Frank. Which pleased the real Frank who was listening.

"And he had jewels and gold and beautiful toys to play with, and wonderful things to eat, and horses, and dogs, and—"

"And cats?"

"And cats, of course; and birds; and everything in the world that any little boy could want, even a Prince."

"Everything?" Frank asked.

There was something in his tone that made Auntie Sue look at him won-deringly.

"Why, yes, darling, everything!" she said. "I've told you that he had toys, and pets, and people to look after him, and—"

Frank could not help interrupting, though he knew that it was rude to

interrupt.

"And other little boys and girls to play with?" he asked, very eagerly.

Auntie Sue hesitated.

"Why—I suppose, being a Prince," she explained, "he couldn't have a great many playmates, but— What's the matter, dear?"

"Nothing," said Frank, smiling. But he added, half under his breath:

"I guess he was lonely too!"

For a moment Auntie Sue seemed to find it hard to go on, but at last she did, and rather hurriedly:

"Meanwhile, very exciting things were happening in another Kingdom,

-the Kingdom of Fairyland!

"The Fairy King had been stolen away by the Wicked Dwarfs of the Mountain, and the Fairy folk did not know where to look for a ruler. They decided that they in turn would steal some one—some mortal child whom they could teach to be a King, and who would rule over them, when he grew old enough. And they decided on the little Prince!"

"The little Prince-Frank?"

"Yes, of course; the little Prince Frank. And they stole him away one Midsummer Night, and carried him on Wind Horses to Fairyland; and there he was taught how to be a Fairy instead of a human being."

"Was it nice, being a Fairy?" Frank asked.

Auntie Sue told him how very, very nice it was, and described to him the delightful life the little Prince led there in the Fairy Court.

"But at last," she said, "one of the Fairies, one who was very fond of him,—fond enough of him even to send him away if that were the best thing to do,—came to him and told him that the people of his own Kingdom needed him. I mean his very own Kingdom, you know, where he had been born, and where he had expected to be a King and reign. The Fairy told him that after he had been taken away by the people of Fairyland, his ministers and chamberlains and so on had done cruel and unjust things to the people, and that wrong laws had been made, and that the country needed somebody to govern it rightly, and to see that it was happy and prosperous, and safe from wicked statesmen.

"'Alas, my poor Kingdom!' cried the Prince. 'If only I could do something! But I am not yet old enough to reign!—'

"'Does your Highness know how long you have been in Fairyland?" asked his Fairy friend.

"He did not know, and said so. For in Fairyland time does not pass; it stands still, or seems to do so, forever.

"You have been here for what in your mortal time would be ten years,' said the Fairy. You are old enough to reign over your Kingdom, if you choose.'

"'Then I shall start at once!' he cried.

"'The Fairies will not let you; you are their King."

"They cannot stop me!" cried the Prince. 'I will go back to my own land, and care for my own people!"

"'You are to be King of Fairyland,' said the Fairy, 'and the King of

Fairyland may have great happiness.'

"'I would rather have unhappiness in my own Kingdom,' said the Prince, 'for it is my own, and it needs me.'

"Then the Fairy looked at him, and said very slowly:

"'And what about Fairyland, your Highness?"

"The Prince looked back, puzzled. 'But I do not belong here!' he exclaimed.

"'No; but the Fairies have accepted and treated you as their own these ten years back, and they have no Prince nor King to take your place."

"The Prince thought seriously of this, and he said: 'I see that I cannot leave these people either. So I will pledge myself to bring back their rightful King from the Wicked Dwarfs of the Hills.'

"So he set out next day, and, at the head of millions and millions of Fairies, met the Wicked Dwarfs in the fiercest of fierce battles.

"And when the fight was over, and he had conquered, he hunted through the Great Hollow Mountains until he found where they had hidden the King of the Fairies. And he set him free, and took him back to Fairyland.

"'Now,' he said to the Fairies assembled in Court, 'here is your rightful King! So welcome him properly, and I'll go back to my own Kingdom.'

"But the poor Fairy King had been a prisoner for so long that he had forgotten how to rule the Fairies. So they begged the mortal Prince to stay and reign over them as they had planned.

"However, he was determined to go to his Kingdom, and he went, but by the time he got there the wicked chancellors and ministers and chamberlains had put somebody else on the throne, and the people had forgotten all about their rightful Prince; and they laughed at him and threw stones at him."

"So what did he do then?" demanded Frank.

"Then he went back to Fairyland, and helped the poor tired-out old King govern the country. At least, I suppose he did, don't you?"

"And he lived happily ever after?" said Frank.

"I suppose so," Auntie Sue said again, but she spoke doubtfully.

He shook his head.

"No, he didn't," he said; "I know. He didn't belong anywhere in particular, so I guess he *stayed* lonely, Auntie Sue."

It was late and the shadows were getting long and dark. Soon it would

be getting time for tea.

"Thank you, Auntie," said Frank gravely, as he always did after she had told him a tale, whether he liked it or not. And he turned and began to pull the little dead leaves of last winter off a bush close by.

"Didn't you like it?" asked Auntie Sue.

"Oh, yes," he said at once. He was always very polite, and very thoughtful of other persons' feelings. "It was quite a nice story. But, Auntie,—I do sometimes wish that—I mean, I do sometimes get tired of hearing about Princes and Kingdoms and things like that. Aren't there any every day Fairy stories?"

"Why, yes, dear,—there must be," she said, rather bewildered. "I—I'll

try to think of one for next time."

"Thank you," said Frank, in his pleased, polite way.

Then, as he smiled gratefully and started off to collect the two cats, she said:

"Frank, darling,—you're not an unhappy little boy, are you? You—you are happy, dearest?"

"Why, of course I'm happy, Auntie Sue," Frank said, still smiling. With Cotton and Inky both in his arms he went off to the house.

But in Auntie Sue's mind was still the memory of what Frank had said

when she was telling him about the Little Prince:

"I guess he was lonely too! . . . I guess he stayed lonely, Auntie Sue!" And as she too went toward the house, she glanced back at the wall which divided their garden from the laughing and playing children of the Grey House.



Cats and birds, and dogs and rabbits,
All have languages, even as we,
Different tongues, and different habits,—
It stands to reason,—don't you see?
The dog's low growl,
The mouse's squeak,
The lion's roar, the hoot-owl's call,
The grey wolf's howl,
The wild-cat's shriek,—
Mean "Danger" or "Trouble."—one and all!

To understand our animal friends
We ought to know each tongue they speak;
Think of the time a person spends
In learning German, or French, or Greek!
But the puppy's bark,
And the kitten's purr,
The robin's tweet, and the white dove's coo,
The wings in the dark,
With the bats a-stir,—
Should be best worth study, I think,—don't you?
Foreign Languages.

CHAPTER II

THE CHILDREN OF THE GREY HOUSE

HE Grey House was on the Western side of the Garden, the side furthest from Auntie's white house. The morning sun used to make the brick wall shine like copper or red gold. There were sunflowers growing there in the summer; and now, in May, there were nasturtiums and other red and yellow and white flowers; it was the brightest part of all the Garden.

The North Side was the shady part; and beyond that there was nothing to be seen from the Garden except sky. Frank knew that there were fields rolling away in the distance there, because he had looked from the back windows of the house, but he did not look often, because it was so much more beautiful to pretend about it. Anything in the world might lie over there, and even the birds that flew above the three-walled Garden were interesting because they had looked down,—perhaps even alighted and built nests,—somewhere in that Unknown Country!

The South wall was the most exciting of all, for it was the one that hid the village street. Frank could see the chimneys, and smoke coming out from time to time. And he never could feel that the street on the other side of the wall was the same one that he walked or drove down with Nurse or Auntie Sue. Of course he knew that it must be, but when he looked at the wall between it seemed to him that it must be some place quite different.

There were footsteps going by, and horses and wagons, and once in a while great chuggy things that he knew were automobiles, though he would not call them automobiles,—not at least while he was in the Garden. Then they were Snorting Dragons. And, to be sure, that is just as good a name to call them as automobiles.

It was Inky and Cotton who introduced Frank to the children of the Grey House, and it was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to him. All his life, when he looked back, he still thought of it as the most wonderful of wonderful things. Because— But that, as one of the greatest of story-tellers in the world says, is another story!—or, at least, another part of the story.

Frank was exercising the two cats; that is, he was sitting on a bench as usual, watching them romp about and get into playful squabbles, and chase

each other, and go bounding after those fluttering shadows, which they never could leave alone, though they must have learned that they couldn't be caught by the liveliest cat.

"If you aren't quicker than that, Cotton," said Frank to the big white cat, "Inky will catch the shadow first!"

And he laughed, just as though the kitties could understand the joke of a shadow being caught by a cat. He was sure that Cotton did understand what he said, though,—she always did. Even Nurse said that it was "uncanny the way the child talked to the creatures, just as though they were Christians! And they seem to listen to what he has to say, too!"

Once Frank asked her gravely: "How do you know they aren't Christians?" But she only looked shocked.

Anyway, this time Cotton must have understood him, for she turned suddenly, and scratched Inky's nose quite sharply. Cotton *looked* very peaceful and sweet-natured, with her soft white fur and lovely yellow eyes, but her temper had never been of the best.

Inky, because she was little and very black, with bright green eyes, was always expected to be a cross cat; but she wasn't cross at all as a rule, and she was very easily frightened. Now, when Cotton scratched her nose, it both hurt and startled her, and with a wild mew she flew up the trunk of the nearest locust tree, the bark scraping and crumbling under her frantic little claws.

Cotton sat at the foot of the tree with her fluffy white tail lashing back and forth, and Frank could see plainly that she was pleased.

"You bad thing!" he exclaimed, getting up from the bench. "You've scared poor Inky half out of her wits! There!—See her hanging onto that little branch, with her fur all standing up? That means she feels too dreadfully for anything! Now, aren't you sorry?"

Cotton's tail waved more fiercely than ever, and her yellow eyes gleamed. "I must say," Frank went on severely, "you don't look sorry, Cotton! I'll take you into the house, I think. Inky will never dare to come down while you're here. Listen to that dog barking on the other side of the wall! Poor Inky! She'll be more frightened than ever now. She hates dogs; I wonder why? I should think dogs might be nice, if you knew them well."

The dog barked more and more loudly. Inky mewed, and tried to scramble back to a safer and stronger part of the branch, for small as she was she was too heavy for the slender twigs to which she was clinging. But it

was too late! There was a sharp little crack,—a terrified howl from Inky—

"Oh, Cotton!" cried Frank, "she's fallen! She's fallen over on the other side of the wall!—Oh, Cotton, what shall we do? Do you suppose she'll be killed? And oh, Cotton, I do hope that's a kind dog!"

But Cotton had turned already and fled to the house. She was a coward

anyway, like plenty of bad-tempered people.

Much worried, Frank listened with his ear close to the brick wall. There were queer sounds to be heard, spittings and hissings and yelpings, and finally children's voices and running feet. And then some one cried:

"You poor Funny! Did the strange cat hurt you, darling?"

This was more than Frank could bear.

"I'm sure she didn't!" he called as loud as he could. "She's a nice, polite, gentle cat!"

There was a sudden silence, and he heard some one say: "Why, it's the

boy next door!"

"Does the cat belong to you?" called another voice.

"Yes. And I wish she'd come back,—if your dog hasn't frightened her too much!"

There was a burst of merry laughter from the other side of the wall.

"Frightened her! Why, he wouldn't hurt a mouse! He was just trying to play, and she scratched and bit him awfully!" said the voice that had spoken first.

"Then I'm sure he must have said something that hurt her feelings when he barked at her!" insisted Frank. But he was surprised. Fancy Inky biting and scratching a dog! He learned then that lots of persons who are quiet and gentle and timid at home, are brave and even quarrelsome with strangers.

"Anyway," he called, "will you ask her to come home, please?"

"Ask her!" repeated some one. And there was more laughter. "Do your animals do what you ask them to?"

Frank did not like being made fun of any more than any other little boy, but it was so exciting to be talking with real children that he did not mind their laughing at him a little. Now that he knew that Inky was safe he could enjoy the adventure.

"Inky usually does what I ask," he answered, "but I guess she's too scared this time.—Inky!" he cried, raising his voice. "Do please be a good cat and come home at once!"

"She doesn't look a bit like going home!" remarked one of the Grey House children. "She's as cross as two sticks!"

Then Frank heard a soft voice say, pronouncing all the s's as if they were th's:

"There, there! Poor Puthy! Poor Puthy! Be thtill, and Nanthy'll thtroke you nithely!"

"No, no,—let me have her, Nancy!" cried a little voice,—it sounded like that of a very small child, as indeed it turned out to have been,—"I want to stroke the kitty, too!"

Then came several voices:

"One of us better take her over—"

"I'll take her!--"

"No, I will; I'm the oldest.--"

"We'll ask Motherkin.-"

"I know;—let's all go!"

Then one voice called: "We're coming around to your house to bring your cat, little boy next door!"

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Frank. "How perfectly lovely!"

He ran,—yes, he really did run, in spite of his weak legs,—to tell Auntie Sue. It seemed almost too good to be true. Some children,—some flesh-and-blood children,—were actually coming to see him! Even if he never talked to them again, it would be an event to remember forever. He was going to see what the children of the Grey House looked like at last.

Auntie Sue was very nice about it, but not as enthusiastic as he wanted her to be.

"Oh, yes," she said when he had told her. "The Kent children. It's very polite in them to bring Inky back."

"Kent?" said Frank. "Then you knew about them all along, Auntie?-

Knew who they were?"

"Why, yes, dear. They have been there for nearly two months now. I suppose I should have called on Mrs. Kent, but she and I have very few of the same friends, and one lets those things go."

"Two months!" repeated Frank slowly. "Oh, Auntie! To think that you knew their name and all, and that I might have known them, two—whole—months—ago!"

He did not mean to reproach his aunt, but she flushed, and looked as though he had hurt her very much.

"I am sorry," she said gently. "You know, dear, I am quite happy here with you, without seeing other people. That is selfish in me. But, you see,

I am only just beginning to understand what a lonely little boy my Frank is."

And then the front door bell rang, and Frank, quite cold and trembly from excitement, went with his aunt to meet the guests.

Martha was just opening the door, and Frank could hear two or three clear voices, all asking in one breath for "the little boy the cat belongs to."

"Ask them to come in, Martha," Auntie Sue said, smiling kindly.

She looked very beautiful and stately, standing there with a soft light on her lovely white hair.

"How do you do?" she said, as four clean but much rumpled children trooped into the great, dim hall, full of cool green palms and glimmering statues.

One of the little girls,—there were three of them,—came forward and shook hands in a frank, friendly way.

"I'm Margaret Kent," she said,—it was the same voice that had first spoken to the dog on the other side of the wall. "I'm only a cousin, but I'm speaking before the others because they wanted me to. I'm oldest, you see. Here's the cat."

She was holding Inky,—a very wild-eyed Inky,—in her arms.

"I am glad to meet you," said Auntie. "I am Miss Merton, and this is my nephew, Frank. The cat belongs to him."

"How do you do?" said all four, and shook hands with him so heartily that it almost hurt his thin fingers.

Inky had already bounded out of Margaret's grasp, and disappeared up the stairs with a whisking tail. Perhaps she had gone to rest after her adventure, or perhaps she wanted to find Cotton and tell her what she thought of her!

Frank glanced shyly at his guests. All four looked well, and cheerful, and interested. Evidently they admired Auntie Sue's big, beautiful hall very much, for he saw them looking at the statues and pictures and growing plants, though they were too well-mannered to speak of anything they saw.

Margaret was the prettiest, and he decided that he should like her best of the four. She was about his age, with dark hair and rosy cheeks. Her brown eyes were very bright, and she looked as strong and full of life as a healthy kitten.

The other little girls were nearly as big as she was, but Frank learned later that they were both younger. Jenny was not quite ten, but every one

thought her older. She was red-haired, shrill-voiced, and a tom-boy. Frank half-disliked her from the first moment he saw her.

Her sister, a year younger, was Nancy, the one who could not pronounce the letter S. Frank had never before heard any one lisp, and at first he found her hard to understand. But she was a dear little girl, gentle and kind, with pretty fair hair and blue eyes, and such a nice, friendly smile.

And the youngest of the four was a chubby little fellow, five years

old, with yellow hair and blue eyes like Nancy's.

Frank saw that Auntie Sue was watching him with faint anxiety. He was so unused to children that he knew that it was natural for her to feel uncertain as to how he would like it when he really tried it. So he swallowed his shyness as well as he could, and said, in rather a small voice:

"How-how do you do?"

"Hello!" they all four returned, smiling as if they were truly glad to see him.

"My name's Billy," announced the small boy. "I'm five!"

The girl with the red hair hopped first on one foot and then on the other. It was a way she had, as Frank found out afterwards.

"I'm crazy to climb that biggest tree in your garden!" she cried, in a loud, high voice. "We can just see it over the wall. Don't you hate having such a high wall, though?"

"N-no, I like it," said Frank, feeling a trifle scared.

Were all these "well children" going to climb trees and that sort of thing? It was an alarming prospect, but thrilling just the same. He had never seen any one climb a tree.

"Our nameth," lisped Nancy, "are Jane and Ann Kent,—I mean herth and mine." She pointed to the red-haired girl. "I'm Ann, only they call me Nanthy. Jenny'th motht ten, but I'm only eight. Billy'th our brother."

"Do you like to climb trees too?" asked Frank timidly.

Nancy shook her head, smiling.

"I'm too 'fraid!" she said. And Jane laughed loudly.

"Jenny climbth treeth beau-ti-ful-ly!" added Nancy, looking at her tomboy sister with much respect as well as affection.

"Jenny's a mean pig!" said the small boy, Billy, at this point, scowling at his eldest sister.

"My dear!" remonstrated Auntie Sue.

But Billy went on persistently:

"She tooked me up a tree once, an' when she got me up she went down

an' left me, an' she forgot I was there, an' I cried, an' the carpenter working in the kitchen heard me, an' they had to get a ladder, an'—an' Jenny laughed!"

He paused for breath. Jenny laughed again, and Frank was more certain than ever that he did not like her at all, and never would. He supposed she would soon be laughing at him! And what awfully red hair she had! Worse than carrots for dinner.

"Will you have some tea and cake with Frank and me?" asked Auntie Sue.

They all looked very eager, but Margaret said regretfully:

"I'm afraid we mustn't. We couldn't stay anywhere for a real call without asking Motherkin."

"That is quite proper," said Miss Merton approvingly. "I will tell you what we will do. I will call upon Mrs. Kent to-morrow, and bring Frank with me. Won't that be best?"

The four Kents said delightedly that it would be splendid.

"We've wanted to know him for ever so long," said Margaret.

"Seemed silly not to, living next door!" added Jenny.

And five-year-old Billy made them all laugh by saying, with a very bigboy kind of air:

"I'll be glad to have him 'round. I've no one but girls to play with!"

When they had gone, Auntie Sue said: "They are very nice, well-be-haved children. I'm sure it will be all right for you to play with them."

Frank turned to her with shining eyes.

"Oh, Auntie!" he said. "It's like the beginning of a real Fairy Tale,—a Fairy Tale that'll go on and go on every day!"

The call Miss Merton made upon Mrs. Kent marked the beginning of a new life for Frank. The two ladies liked each other at once, and while they drank tea and chatted on the airy verandah, he made friends with the children. He found that the house had never been regularly named, and that they were quite willing to call it the Grey House, as he did. And they were pleased that he had been wondering about them while they were wondering about him.

The Grey House was a simple place,—not nearly so big nor so handsome as the one in which Auntie Sue and he lived,—but it was homelike and comfortable, and pretty from top to bottom, even if it was not very grand nor gorgeous.

Frank, in spite of his shyness, found himself feeling quite at home. And

when he had made friends with the dog that had frightened Inky it seemed to him that he belonged to the family.

"What a queer name he has!" he said, patting the waggling fox-terrier.

"'Funny' did you say it was?"

"Yes,—Funny," answered Margaret. "It is a silly sort of name, I suppose, but we named him when he was a puppy, and he was so funny-looking! All paws, you know!"

"Margot always liked him best of any pets we ever had," said Jenny. Frank looked puzzled, so they explained that "Margot," (which they pronounced as if it had no t) was just a short way of saying Margaret in French. They all called her that, and it seemed more like her than the serious-sounding Margaret.

And by the bye, it was Margot who as a tiny child had given Mrs. Kent the funny little name by which all the children called her. Margaret would try to say "Mother Kent," but "Mother-Ken'" was as close as she could get to it. So little by little it came to be "Motherkin," and, odd as it sounded, it somehow suited her.

Frank became a regular visitor at the Grey House. In fact he was there so much that often Auntie Sue felt lonely. But the Doctor-Man, when she spoke to him about Frank's new existence, said: "Let the child alone, and have him try it! Anything to cheer him up, and keep him lively and amused! Try it for the poor little chap's sake, Miss Merton!"

So Auntie Sue sat at home and worried about him, but said nothing to interfere with his new pleasures.



Patter, patter, patter!
Listen to the rain,
Making such a clatter
On the window pane.
The angry sparrows scatter,
They fuss and scold and chatter;
Patter, patter, patter,—
It's worse and worse again!

I do really wonder
How it keeps up yet;
Here's a tree,—get under;
It's no use to fret.
Hear the Giant Thunder
Bang the clouds asunder!
Will we drown, I wonder?
My goodness, but you're wet!

See the lightning flashing;
Hi! It's storming hard!
Stricken tree-tops crashing,
Burnt and cracked and marred;
And all this fuss and clashing
Is just (now hear that smashing!)
So the Kelpies can go splashing
In the puddles in the yard!

The Wet Weather Kelpies.

CHAPTER III

WET WEATHER

RANK soon grew to feel that he had known the Kent children always, and he liked them ever so much,—all except Jenny. He could not get used to Jenny's bluntness and roughness of manner. He hated her shrill voice, and he felt very sorry for gentle little Nancy, to have to have her for a sister. They were apparently fond of each other, however, so, as Frank admitted to himself when he felt particularly generous, Jenny might have some good points after all. But they certainly were hard to discover.

You see, Frank was very shy and sensitive at first, and Jenny's boisterous ways made a disagreeable impression upon him. It was too bad, for it made a lot of bother and trouble before the end of it all. Frank grew much more sensible about many things later, and Jenny much more considerate and gentle, but at the beginning she was always making fun of Frank, and he was always feeling annoyed at her.

But except for Jenny, he was very happy whenever he went to see the Kents,—and, for that matter, in between times, for he could always remember and look forward. Somehow, all the things that he had half unconsciously missed in his quiet life with Auntie Sue were in the Grey House. Motherkin's stories, though full of Fairies, were every-day stories; the life of these children was a real life, not entirely a Make-Believe one, though they could Make-Believe as well as any one!

He told Auntie Sue about Motherkin's way of making everything, even all the every-day things, seem Fairy-like and yet real.

"She says," he declared earnestly, "that we can make things just the same as real by Make-Believing hard enough!"

"I think she is right," said Miss Merton gently.

"Do you suppose, Auntie,—" Frank hesitated,—"do you suppose—if I believe hard enough—my Jack-in-the-box would come to life and talk to me?"

Ever since he had been a little, little boy, he had dreamed of that, and thought what fun it would be if Jack should pop up some day, and cry: "Hello, Frank!"

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Auntie Sue smiled.

"Maybe," she said. "Anyway, it doesn't do any harm to expect that he'll come to life!"

So the friendship grew, and even Cotton and Inky came to view poor Funny, the dog, with less distrust and hate. He used to come to see Frank with the Kents sometimes, and soon proved to the cats that he would not hurt them for worlds. Indeed, as Margot said, they were a good deal more likely to hurt him, with their sharp claws and excitable dispositions!

"I wonder if Funny knows how to talk?" said Frank one day.

Margot looked most indignant.

"Know how, indeed!" she exclaimed, picking the little dog up and hugging him. "I should say he does know how! Why, he does talk!"

"Oh, he makes a lot of noise, I know," said Frank, "but he hasn't nearly so much expression as Cotton or Inky. Look at their tails, and the way their fur stands on end! And they can mew, or purr, or—"

"Look at Funny's ears!" cried Margaret. "You can tell just what he's thinking by the way he cocks them, or lets them lie flat. And Funny can laugh! Any one can see him laughing. Cats don't laugh!—"

Then they began to laugh—at each other!

"What geese we are!" said Margot.

"I guess," said Frank, "that we understand our animals best, that's all. You think Funny says more than Cotton and Inky, because he's a friend of yours. And I'm just the same about them!"

Frank began to grow stronger and more cheerful, and less timid and shy, and he was hardly ever lonely now. It was Auntie Sue who was lonely.

Mrs. Kent was small and brown-eyed and quick and gentle. Mr. Kent was big and very fair,—as fair as Billy. Motherkin called him Billy, too, Frank noticed. The whole family cared a great deal for one another, that was clear, and there was one very nice thing to think of: there didn't seem to be the slightest difference between Margot, who was Mrs. Kent's niece, and the others, who were her own daughters.

"Margot's father and mother are—not here," Motherkin said softly to Frank, once when they were alone together. "And I would try to be doubly a mother to her for that reason, even if I didn't love her for her own sake,— which goodness knows I do,—dear child!"

"Why,—" said Frank, "that's what Auntie Sue says!—Or something like that. Are Aunties sort of—pretendings for mothers?"

"Something of that sort," said Motherkin, with a queer little sound that

might have been a laugh and might have been a sob. "They're only 'pretendings' of course, but—they do the best they can."

"Of course," said Frank. "I know they do. And they make very nice pretendings."

Even wet weather did not keep Frank away from his friends,—or would not have kept him away if Auntie Sue had not drawn the line on his going out when it was actually raining. On days when it merely looked like rain, Frank would plead so hard that usually she would let him go, if he would promise to scurry back from the gate if a single drop fell while he was on his way over.

One day it had been preparing for a thunder-storm since morning, and she and he both knew that there would be one before night, but she said with a sigh, after he had begged very nicely: "Well, you may go! But remember, you mustn't be out in the rain either going or coming!"

Frank raced off, and had the good luck to just reach the Grey House before the pattering on the leaves and a flash of lightning told him that the storm had really come.

He found Margot curled up in the hall reading, with Funny asleep at her feet.

"Hello!" she cried joyfully. "I am so glad you came! Rainy days are so poky, unless Motherkin tells stories."

The rain was coming down hard now, and Margot gave a sort of shiver. "I always hate thunder and lightning," she said. "I don't know why. Motherkin says it's because I was in a great storm when I was a baby."

"I don't like storms either," said Frank, "but I don't believe it's because of anything that happened when I was a baby. I don't know, though, because Auntie'll never talk about that time."

"Your father and mother—went away—too, didn't they?" said she.

Frank nodded.

"How did they go?" she persisted.

"I don't know."

"Don't you,—really? Mine,—well, I'm not sure, because they won't talk to me much about it either,—but I think they were—drowned. Mother-kin just told me that once I was one of a twin, and that we,—my father and mother and twin and I,—all went sailing over the sea one day, and the others sailed on till they reached the Country where the sun goes to rest every evening; but I came back."

"And that's all you know?" said Frank in a whisper.

"That's all I know.—Come on! They've lighted a fire in the parlour, I do believe! Oh, that is jolly! And won't it feel splendid this damp day, even if it is almost June?"

The fire was comforting, and the dancing flames and smell of burning wood were made all the pleasanter by the noise of the rain and thunder and the grey light outside. Motherkin and Billy were already enjoying the blaze, and Jenny and Nancy ran in soon afterwards.

"Good for you!" said Jenny to Frank. "I didn't think you'd dare come out in the rain."

"It wasn't raining when I came," Frank had to say truthfully.

Jenny laughed mockingly. "I might have known it!" she cried.

"Hush, Jenny!" said her mother, quietly and gravely. She took Frank's hand with a smile. "I'm very glad you came, anyway," she said. "Listen to that thunder-clap, children! And won't the Kelpies have a good time in the puddles?"

Frank looked bewildered, and Nancy said: "Tell him about the Kelpieth, Motherkin!"

Motherkin smiled again, and explained, quite seriously, as though she were telling some true, important facts:

"You know there are all sorts of Fairies,—of the earth, air, fire and water; Fairies of the Under-the-World, and the Top-of-the-World, and Fairies of dreams, and houses, and storms and—well, everything. Some live in Fairy countries, and some in stars, and some have disguises that few mortals can see through, and live all about us. There are the Story Book People, and Frost People, and Sea-Spirits, and Flower Elves, and Ogres, and Witches and Fairy Godmothers, and ever so many more. I've heard that, taken all together, there are seven hundred and seventy-seven different varieties of Fairies, ranging from the Giants and Trolls to the wee Pixies and Brownies and Kelpies.

"Maybe you don't know much about the Kelpies. There are differences of opinion about them, for some persons believe that they are good, and others that they are very mischievous. But most wise men who know about Fairies and their customs tell us that, good or bad, the Kelpies are all People of the Water. They are only happy in the water, and when they live far away from lakes and rivers, they are melancholy except when there is a shower. Sometimes they want puddles and rivulets in which to play or swim about so badly that they send messages to the kind-hearted clouds to please bring up a storm for them! Maybe that's what brought this rain!"

"Well," said Margot, "if it's the Kelpies' doing, I'll forgive even the thunder and lightning. And anyway, it's nice to have the fire!"

"Ah, that's another thing about them!" said Motherkin. "The Fairies of the Fire and the Fairies of the Water never get on together. Fire dries up water, and water puts out fire, and the two together make a lot of steam and boiling and fuss. We make use of the steam and the boiling, but they don't like it! They're always fighting each other; there's no use at all trying to make peace between them. That's why, when we want to put out a fire we throw water on it, and why, when it rains and is wet and sloppy, we light a fire, like this. One fights the other."

"I wish they really fought!" said Jenny, who was naturally quarrelsome.

"They do," said Motherkin. "Get me a match, and I'll show you."

Match in hand, she went to the window, opened it a crack, and lighted the match. The little flame hissed and sputtered against the spatter of rain, as if it were indeed fighting as hard as it knew how. The match was burned nearly down to the end before one particularly big raindrop finally put it out.

"There!" said Mrs. Kent. "You see they really do fight!"

"Tell us a story about it, Motherkin!" begged Margot.

Mrs. Kent laughed. "About what?" she said.

"The Fire Fairies and the Water Kelpies."

"Well, which? It can't be both; there isn't time."

The children wasted five minutes trying to make up their minds, but finally voted in favour of a story about the fire. As Margot put it:

"Then we can all sit by the fire while you tell it, and that's lots nicer than looking out at the rain!"

And so Motherkin told them this story.

"Cross-patch,—" the verses say,—
"Sit by the fire, and spin!"
But the Kobolds gay
Have a jollier way,
They sit in the fire and grin;
They whirl in the smoke,
The Kobold Folk,
But never tumble in!

"Rain-bows,—"the whole world knows,—
"Lead to the Pot of Gold!"
But the Kobolds wise
Have a brighter prize,
Which they keep from the days of old;
The firelight's flare
Is the treasure rare
That the wealthy Kobolds hold!

"A,-B,—" and "C, D, E;—"
Don't you dare forget!
But the Kobold Folk
Think it's all a joke,
For they have no alphabet.
They started, you see,
At X Y Z,
And they're making up letters yet!

The Clever Kobolds.

CHAPTER IV

MOTHERKIN'S STORY

NCE upon a time there was a little shepherd boy who lived in a tiny cottage with his grandmother. It had no floor, only earth stamped down hard and stones, and it had a queer roof made of straw and rushes mixed with mud, which was called a thatch. They were very poor but quite happy, for they did not want things which cost a great deal of money. They ate simple food, and wore rough, comfortable clothes, and were busy all day long; and the cottage was on a grassy hill with a lovely view of the valley and plenty of fresh air and sunshine, so why should they not have been content?

"The little shepherd boy's name was Bennie, and his grandmother was Goody Moll. In those days, (it was away back in the middle of English history somewhere), they often called old ladies Goody. I'm sure I don't

tory somewhere), they often called old ladies Goody,—I'm sure I don't know why, so you needn't ask! It may have been just a way of being polite; I know they used to say "Good-man" to nice old men whom they respected.

"Bennie tended sheep for a great, rich Baron who lived in a fine castle in the valley, and the Baron gave him a sheep or two now and then, and Bennie used to help Goody shear off their fleece, so she could spin wool with which to weave or knit warm things to wear. And though Bennie was paid very little,—even grown-up men did not earn much in those days,—it was enough for his grandmother and him. They had a little vegetable garden, a few chickens, and a goat to milk, and on the whole they did very well indeed. The goat's name was Maria, and she used to chase the sheep and frighten them nearly to death.

"Every morning, when it was barely light, Bennie would swallow a bowl of fresh goat's milk, and a lump of bread for breakfast. It was funny bread, which you would not like at all, hard and tough and greyish brown in colour, for they had not yet learned how to make nice, white, light bread. Yeast was not even used in those days. But Bennie was always hungry and always enjoyed what he ate, and, after he had filled a little sack or bag with a coarse lunch for mid-day and fastened it to his belt, he would run down into the valley and get the Baron's flock of sheep.

"Sometimes it would be damp and chilly, but it was always fresh and sweet-smelling, and the dew on the grass shone brightly as the sun came up.

Bennie would almost dance for joy. And when he was driving the sheep up the hillside with the sheep-bells tinkling, the sound was so merry and pleasant that he wanted to make a happy noise too, and he would sing and whistle as loud as he could, all the way up in the light of the sunrise.

"And every night when he came home, his grandmother would have a nice hot supper waiting for him,—a very plain supper we should think it, but oh, how good it tasted after being out of doors all day!"

Frank gave a small sigh. Maybe she was right. Almost anything might taste good if you'd been herding sheep for hours and hours and hours. He wished he could try it; but he supposed Auntie Sue would be afraid he'd catch cold or have a sunstroke or something! Motherkin heard the sigh, but as she caught his eyes, he smiled cheerfully, so she smiled too, and went on with the story:

"There was no stove, of course, in the cottage,—not even a regular chimney! Goody Moll cooked everything over a fire which she built in a hollow dug out of the clay floor of the hut and lined with heavy flat stones to make a sort of hearth. The smoke went out through a hole in the roof. I don't know what they did when it rained or snowed. It must have been quite uncomfortable, and expensive too, for they had to pay a tax every year for the privilege of having a fire at all;—think of that! They called it hearthmoney.

"When supper was eaten, and the bowls and plates put away, Goody Moll and her grandson would sit together until the fire burned out, talking quietly or nodding with drowsiness. Sometimes Granny told him tales of the Fairies,—or Little People as they like better to be called. She seemed to have known many of them personally in her day, and she had all their ways and customs at her fingers' ends.

"'Granny, are you a Witch?' Bennie asked her more than once; for it's certain that she looked enough like one, with her wrinkled yellow face and sharp eyes and rough white hair. And Granny would cackle out a laugh, and tap her stick on the ground. She always did that when she was either amused or angry.

"'And maybe I am that!' she would say. 'But you'll never know the aye or the no of it, Bennie-Boy! 'Tis enough for you that I'm well acquaint with the God People. They'll favour you for my sake.'

"She told him about a great many kinds of Fairy folk,-Pixies and

Sprites and Dwarfs and Water Nixes, and Goblins and so on, but the one that Bennie always took the most interest in was the Hearth Kobold. Granny said that every home with a hearth and a fire,—and most homes have at least one,—had a special Kobold all to itself, a little Gnome-like creature who lived close to the fire and kept crickets for pets, and made things comfortable and easy for the people of the house. She said lots of stupid folk got his voice mixed up with the chirp of the crickets and the singing and crackling sounds of the flames, and that even when he took the trouble to make himself visible he was often taken for a flickering shadow on the hearth. But she said that children and very old people and those who were unusually wise could nearly always see the real little Kobold himself.

"Of course I don't have to tell you that Bennie soon saw him! Yes, he really did. The fire was dying down, and he and Granny were sitting silently beside it. And suddenly a log fell apart and the flame shot up for an instant, and there, sure enough, was a little bit of a man, not longer than your hand, cross-legged on one of the hearthstones, and grinning away as cheerfully as you please! The next moment,—he was gone.

"'Granny,—Granny!' cried Bennie. 'I've seen him,—I've seen the Kobold!'

"Goody Moll was nodding and her eyes were shut. So Bennie shook her arm gently. T've seen the Hearth Kobold!" he repeated, and she opened her eyes and chuckled.

"'Like enough, like enough!' she said, tapping with her stick, and then went to sleep for the rest of the evening.

"After that he saw the Kobold often, and more and more clearly each time. He soon found that his grandmother did not like him to talk about it, and at first he did not know why; but one day she told him that the Fairies were very odd and sensitive, and had rules of their own; that they chose the mortals to whom they wanted to appear, and that they thought it a matter of good manners not to discuss your particular Fairies with any other human being. Whether or not Goody herself ever saw the little man on the hearth Bennie never knew. She never seemed to notice when he appeared, but that may have been just her sly way, or because she understood the feelings of the Little People too well.

"One evening, when Granny was asleep,—or pretending to be anyway,—Bennie and the Kobold began to talk to each other!"

Again Frank gave a quick little sigh, but this time it was excitement of

the most breathless sort. Talk to each other! Why, it almost seemed as though there were a chance for him to talk to his Jack-in-the-box after all!

"The Kobold appeared to have an impulsive nature and rather a quick temper. Perhaps it was living so close to the flames that made him so peppery and sudden in everything he did. Anyhow, it was this way that the conversation started, and you may fan y how unexpected and startling it was to our friend Bennie! Granny was dozing, and the boy was looking at the Kobold, who had just appeared, cross-legged as usual, in a particularly bright patch of red firelight. Bennie of course had never dared to speak to the little man; he knew that any Fairy person would be offended by such a piece of impertinence as that. He just sat and stared, though quite respectfully. And the cross-legged mite stared back, grinning till his face looked as though it were going to crack in two pieces.

"'Are you as stupid as you look?' burst out the Kobold suddenly.

"Poor Bennie positively jumped. 'I—I don't know,' he said, very meekly.

"'I dare say you are,' said the Kobold. 'Now I am even cleverer than I look,—if possible!' He grinned. 'What do you think of me, anyway?'

"I think,' replied Bennie timidly, 'that you're awfully pleased with yourself.'

"'Right!' agreed the Kobold. 'And very sensible of me too. Myself is well worth being pleased with. Go on.'

"'Granny says,' went on Bennie, a little bolder, 'that it's stupid to be pleased with yourself.'

"It would be for you, to be sure,' said the Kobold, 'for you've nothing to be pleased with. But I'm different.'

"Bennie felt quite cross. Of course it was an honour to be talking to a real live Fairy, but he didn't see why the creature need be so impolite.

"'What do you do?' he asked, rather sharply, 'besides sit in the fire and grin?'

"He was astonished to see the effect of this speech upon the Kobold. The little man leaped to his feet and squeaked with rage just like a very furious mouse. He danced about wildly, and jumped up and down, and abused Bennie all the time, till it sounded like a perfect shower of crackling sparks.

"'You wicked wretch!' he shrieked. 'You nasty, rude, objectionable,

ungrateful, horrid, disrespectful, insulting, stupid, detestable, disagreeable, unpleasant beast of a Human Boy!' (If you'll believe me, he didn't even stop for breath.) 'What do I do, indeed! What do I do? I can do anything I like, for nice, kind, polite, respectful boys! But you,—you miserable, silly, impertinent, hateful, ugly'—

"But Bennie was getting tired of being talked to like that, and he sprang to his feet too, in a fit of temper. As he did so, he tipped over a jug of water that was standing near the hollow where the hearth was, and the water put out the fire with a great hissing and spluttering. Of course the Kobold disappeared with the flame.

"'Oh, Granny!' Bennie cried in dismay, 'I've put out the Kobold!'

"Granny did not answer a word, but he could hear her muttering and laughing to herself; at her own thoughts, maybe. When he had cooled off, Bennie felt more and more badly about it, for he knew that he had failed to make friends with the Kobold, and that the chance might never be offered him again. Besides, he had to go out in the dark to fill the water jug at the spring; and the wet logs went on smoking and sputtering for an hour. So he got punished anyway!

"But, do you know, the Kobold did not seem to bear malice a bit! When the fire was burning again the next evening, there he was once more, as jaunty and jolly as ever. He was grinning gaily, and his little chuckle could be heard as plainly as possible. Goody Moll paid no attention; she was growing a little deaf anyway. When she was nodding as usual, Bennie got together enough courage to speak.

"I hope the water didn't do you any harm last night?"

"'None at all,' replied the Kobold pleasantly. 'I think it did me good. Do you know,' he added confidentially, 'I believe,—it seems ridiculous to say such a thing of course: everybody knows what a lovely disposition I have!—but I really do believe that I was almost—on the verge—of losing—my—temper!'

"Bennie remembered the frantic little figure, dancing with anger the night before, but he only said, very politely, 'Yes, I think perhaps you were.'

"The Kobold laughed. 'Most amusing!' he said. 'Well, it's all right now. I should have hated to get really annoyed. It would be so undignified, you know! Let me see, where was I when you drowned me?'

"You were just,' began Bennie truthfully, 'at "miserable, silly, impertinent, hatefu" '— But the fire suddenly began to crackle very loudly indeed, and the Kobold with a slight frown broke in hastily:

"I remember! I was just telling what I could do for nice, well-mannered boys. Now, my young friend," (it did seem funny to be called 'my young friend' by a thing only four inches high!) 'I don't know whether you are very well acquainted with the ways of Kobolds? But your grandmother—an excellent woman, my boy, and an old friend of mine,—will probably have told you something about us. I have wanted to have a chat with you for some time, for we People of the Hearthstone like to make friends with human beings while they are still young. Then we can stay their friends for many years,—sometimes for the whole of their lives. It is a queer fact, boy, which you will surely find out in time, that one who has sat by his own fireside and talked with the Kobold who lives there, will always be able to call him back in after years, whenever and wherever he sits beside a fire.'

"I won't try to tell you all that the little Kobold said, for he talked on and on, until his voice seemed to be lost in the chatter of the flames; and as they sank lower and lower the sound grew fainter and fainter, till the fire and the Kobold vanished together, and Bennie fell fast asleep. And Granny lifted her head and smiled in the darkness. Perhaps she had been having pleasant dreams.

"They became great friends, the boy and the Kobold. Sometimes Bennie could hardly wait for sunset, to get home to the fire and his new friend. And this impatience got him into great trouble, as you will soon see.

"One afternoon he had been sitting on the hill, dreaming and dozing through the sunny afternoon, and roused himself with a start to find that the sun was already sinking. Jumping up, he called to the sheep, and ran down the grassy slope with the flock scurrying ahead of him and the bells jingling like mad. He drove the animals into their pen and started for home, but—he had raced off in such a hurry that he had not waited to count the sheep! Four of them were missing, and the servants of the castle told the Baron that Bennie had stolen them. The Baron was very angry, for he had been kinder to the boy than most noblemen were to their shepherds, and he sent two stout men-at-arms on fast horses to overtake poor Bennie.

"So that night he was locked up in the Baron's castle, and it was so dark and cold and ghostly that he fairly cried with unhappiness and fear. He did not know what they could do to little boys who were supposed to have stolen from their masters, but he was worried anyway. Oh, if only he could be back in the thatched cottage, with Granny tapping the hearthstone with her stick, and the Kobold grinning at him in the firelight!

"'I suppose,' thought Bennie sadly, 'that I'll never see either of them any more!'

"After a while he went to sleep, and while he was asleep he dreamed that the Kobold was sitting beside him.

"'Well, now you've gotten yourself into a pretty fix!' said the Kobold in his dream. 'Why don't you send for me, you great silly?'

"'But how can I?' Bennie dreamed that he exclaimed. And just as he waked up, he seemed to hear the Kobold's voice dying away, and what it said was 'How? Why, ask for a fire!' He rubbed his eyes and realised that he had been asleep. But the dream had given him a new idea and fresh hope. When the Jailer came in a little later Bennie was shivering. He didn't have to pretend either; he was shivering with cold and fright and excitement. The Jailer was not a hard-hearted man, though often he had to appear so.

"'Dear, dear!' said he, 'it's a pity to see a lad like you die of a chill! I'll get a cloak to warm you.' And so he did; but Bennie went on shivering in spite of it. 'Dear, dear!' said the good Jailer again. 'I'll get you a bowl of hot broth!' And he did. But Bennie's teeth chattered away harder than ever, so that he could hardly drink the soup.

"'Dear, dear, dear!' exclaimed the Jailer, really alarmed. 'I'll have to fetch you a bit of a fire, that I will! There's nothing here to be harmed or burned.' So he brought in a big, blazing log of wood and set it down on the cold stone floor.

"'There, my poor boy!' he said. 'I hope you'll get warm at last! Get to sleep and don't worry. Maybe they won't hang you in the morning after all!'

"And with those comforting words he went away!

"As soon as he heard the heavy key click in the lock, Bennie crept close to the blazing log, and cried softly, 'Oh, Kobold! My dear Hearthstone Kobold! If only you would come to me!"

"The flame leaped higher and higher. It was wonderful how much flame could come from a single log of wood. The light made the walls of the dungeon a beautiful bright red, and the crackle and sputter sounded so like the fire in Goody Moll's cottage that Bennie cried with homesickness to hear it. And then,—pop!—out of the reddest and most gleaming part of the burning wood jumped a big, glittery spark; but instead of flying upward and disappearing like ordinary sparks, this one hung flickering in the air.

"And lo and behold,—it wasn't a spark at all, but Bennie's Kobold himself, dancing and dancing about! It was the first time Bennie had realised that although he had no wings he could fly as well as any of the Fairies. And as he flew, or rather danced, between the ceiling and the floor of the dungeon, kicking his tiny legs and waving his wee arms, he sang a song. It was such a crazy little song that he *must* have made it up as he went along!"

At this point, Motherkin poked up the fire, explaining that "it was to make the flames play the accompaniment!" Then, almost under her breath, she sang the Kobold's song:

"I'm the tricksy Fireside Pixy,

Spells and pranks forever mingling,

See me twinkle,

Hear me tinkle,

Till your very ears are tingling!

Watch me stealing

To the ceiling,

Kneeling,

Reeling,

Toe-and-heeling,

Listen to my merry squealing,

As I dance

And as I prance;

Did you ever,—

You could never!—

See an elf so wondrous clever;

I'm the brightest,

And the lightest,—

You may see that at a glance!

Ho! The gleaming

Flames a-streaming,—

Beaming,

Steaming,

Hissing, screaming!

Did you think that you were dreaming,

When you saw me make a face?

You may hurry,

You may worry,

But with all your flurry-scurry,

You'll not catch me,
You'll not match me,
In a thousand years of chase!
Hear me cackle,
Hear me crackle,
As I make the big flames humble,
They may grumble,
Tumble,
Rumble,
But they do what I desire;
Little Mortal, is it scary
To behold so great a Fairy?
I'm a tricksy
Sort of Pixy,
I'm the Kobold of the Fire!

"When he had finished singing, the Kobold said, briskly, 'Now I'll tell you what you must do. You must step onto the log here, and balance yourself carefully, for it may wobble a bit.'

"Bennie looked from him to the log in horror. 'But—but—' he stammered, 'I shall be burned up!'

"The Kobold sputtered and choked with rage until Bennie was afraid he would have a fit there and then. 'You simpleton! You dunce!' he screamed. 'What's the good of adopting you, and making dreams for you, and taking the trouble to travel all the way here to help you? You're a fool! You're not worth helping! You're—'

"'Oh, stop!' cried Bennie. 'I'll do whatever you tell me to,—I will indeed!'

"That's better,' said the Kobold, calming down. 'You see, fire must obey me, so when I whistle to the burning log, it will follow wherever I lead like one of your nice little mortal dogs. Hop on there,—steady! Now, wait and see!"

"Trembling a good deal, Bennie stepped onto the blazing wood. Though his feet were bare, he found to his surprise that the flames did not scorch him at all, but felt merely warm and comfortable. The only bother was in keeping his balance, for, as the Kobold had said, the log did wobble!

"The Fairy flew to the barred window, which was high up in the wall, close to the ceiling. He put out one hand and touched the bars, and they melted away altogether. 'Come!' cried the Kobold to the log of wood. And the log rose in the air, all blazing and crackling, with Bennie teetering on it

among the flames. And it sailed straight out of the window and away toward Goody Moll's cottage, with the Kobold leading the way!

"That's really the end of the story,—but I suppose you will all want to know, as usual, what happened after that! Well, the Kobold's help did not stop with Bennie's escape from the Baron's dungeon and safe return to his granny. First of all the sheep must be returned. So the Kobold sent the burning log to burn up the walls of the pen where they were being kept by a wicked and dishonest man who had stolen them from the flock. As soon as they were free, the sheep ran helter-skelter down into the valley and their own sheepfold.

"The servants of the castle ran to spread the news that the lost beasts had come back, and the kind-hearted Jailer rushed off to the Baron without delay, begging leave to set the prisoner free. But the Kobold had just appeared in a dream to the Baron, and had told him to forget all about the stolen sheep as soon as he should wake. So when every one began to talk to him about it, the noble master scowled and yawned, and said:

"'I don't know what you're all talking about! You're a pack of idiots!"

"The Jailer made him go to the dungeon to see for himself, but when they went in there was no prisoner,—nothing but a heap of ashes, and the empty bowl, and the old cloak. For, according to parting directions, the log had come back and burned itself out upon the floor of the dungeon.

"'Poor boy!' wept the Jailer. 'He's burned up! Dear, dear, dear!'

"'Stuff and nonsense!' said the Baron, with another yawn. 'Getting me up at this hour with such a silly tale as this!— Aren't those my sheep bells, by the way? That shepherd boy is as prompt as the sun!'

"Then he went back to bed, and Bennie drove the flock up the hill as usual. It was just sunrise, and he sang for joy as he walked through the sweet wet grass."

That evening Frank sat by the nursery fire staring at the flames and thinking about Kobolds and sheep and other exciting things. He wished he had a Kobold. He leaned forward and peered hopefully into the heart of the blaze. After all, even Bennie had not seen his little man all at once; it had taken some time. Maybe if one tried hard to see him, and kept on trying, and trying, and trying. . . .

"Supper is ready, darling," said Auntie Sue, coming softly into the room. "Oh, Auntie!" cried Frank, eagerly. "Please you look too! There—

in the fire! Can't you see something,—at the right, under the end of the littlest log? I—I was almost sure I did then! And there was such a funny little squeaky noise,—truly!"

"That's the sap drying in the wood," explained Auntie Sue. "What's the matter, dear?" For Frank sighed.

"Nothing," he said rather sadly, getting up. "I'll come to supper. Auntie Sue, I—I s'pose I couldn't have some grey-coloured bread and fresh goat's milk?"

Poor Auntie Sue turned pale.

"My blessed child!" she murmured anxiously. "I believe you are feverish. I don't think it is good for you to stay so long with the Kent children; it overtires you. Come and have some nice, *cold* milk, dearest!"

Frank went obediently, but he gave a little wriggle in spite of himself. Grown-Ups simply couldn't understand,—or only a very, very few Grown-Ups like Motherkin. Even Auntie Sue,—and she was such a dear Grown-Up,—couldn't always understand. It wasn't her fault; she just couldn't... Frank sat meekly at the supper table, eating porridge and milk and apple sauce, but thinking of that mysterious queer-tasting food that was eaten by Goody Moll and Bennie in the little thatched cottage on the hillside.

In the dark, in the dark
Where there's never a gleam nor spark,
I love to dream, I love to hark,—
In the dark, in the dark!

When there's light, when there's sight, Everything is different, quite: Some things dim, some things bright, In the light, in the light.

So I'd rather, rather be Where I couldn't really see; And, from sight and light set free, Dream of what I'd *like* to see!

In the dark, in the dark, Hush, and hear, and heed, and hark: Every fancy leaves a mark In the dark, in the dark!

Imagination.

CHAPTER V

"VENGEANCE UPON JENNY!"

NE mysterious thing to Frank about the Kent children was school, —or as Motherkin had taught them to call it, the "Path of Knowledge." Apparently, it was a rough path for most feet, but it brought you to wonderful places if you followed it long enough, and if all that you heard about it were true. Some persons, like Jenny for instance, could trip along it easily. That seemed unjust, for Nancy and Margot who tried much harder never made so much progress. Jenny laughed at her lessons,—though she was always able to do them,—and laughed at the others when she found them studying at odd hours.

Frank's own lessons had, so far, been very simple. His delicate little body had kept him from school, and no one had ever taught him things regularly, every day at certain times. Of course, he had learned a good deal from Auntie Sue, and from the books they read together, but that was all. When he heard that the Kents sat and studied or stood and recited among ever so many other children so that any one could look at them and listen to them, he felt horrified. How could one bear that? But they were used to it,—even Billy did not bother much about it,—and could not quite understand why it struck him as so very dreadful.

Mrs. Kent and Auntie Sue had many talks toward the end of the "School Year," as people called the period of trudging up the "Path of Knowledge," and once or twice Frank heard scraps of their conversation which made him vaguely uneasy. He was afraid of he knew not what. And, at last, ten days before the end of School, he knew what it was!

Motherkin had convinced Miss Merton that, another winter, he would be happier and healthier in school, and it was suggested that he should go every day for the last week, and see how he thought he would like it. It was just a little village school and not very strict, and Motherkin knew the teacher, and he would not have to be in a regular class nor do any frightening work. He could just look on, and see if it was as awful as he might have thought it would be.

Well, he went, swallowing lumps of terror in his throat the first morning, but afterwards getting more at ease. The eager-faced boys and girls, so in-

terested in their work, made him want to be at work too, and he liked the teacher, Miss Clark. She was kind and pretty, and told him she hoped he would be in her school next season.

The very last day of all everybody was overflowing with mischief and high spirits, and Miss Clark smiled and pretended not to notice many little broken rules. But there was a limit even to her patience.

Margot and Jenny had been whispering to each other, and as every one knows, one must not whisper in class. Miss Clark caught them. Jenny put on an innocent air, but honest Margot flushed and hung her head, and any one could see that she had been breaking rules.

"Margaret Kent," said the teacher, "were you, or were you not, talking in the classroom?"

"Yes, Miss Clark," murmured Margot, looking very unhappy.

"Go to the blackboard," said Miss Clark, "and write 'Silence is Golden' so the class can see it. Then you may stand on the platform back of me until recess."

In a dead silence, poor Margot did as she was told. Her bright colour had faded, and she looked as though she were going to cry; but she did not cry. Nancy whispered in Frank's ear: "Oh, poor thweet darling! Margot hateth to do wrong and have people croth to her!"

"Jane Kent!" began Miss Clark, evidently meaning to punish Jenny in the same way as her cousin. But at this point there was a crash, a scream, and a scramble. Jenny, in getting up to answer to her name, had somehow tripped and fallen, tipping over the inkstand, tearing her dress, and crying that she had hurt her ankle.

In the flurry of wiping up the ink and examining the ankle, her punishment was let pass, and Margot bore hers alone. And when, at recess, she came down from the platform, still bravely choking back her tears, Frank saw Jenny,—wonderfully recovered from the hurt ankle,—chuckling. Clearly, she felt that she had been very lucky,—or was it very sly?—in getting out of her punishment!

Margot dried her tears before they fell, and seemed to forget about it very soon. Also, strange as it appeared to Frank, she did not bear malice toward Jenny. But he did. Deep down in his heart he felt savage and revengeful and bitter, for the first time in his gentle life. If he had ever read melodramatic stories, he would have cried: "Vengeance upon Jenny!"

It was not a passing school-room incident to him, because he was not accustomed to school-rooms. To his way of thinking, Margot had been pub-

licly hurt and shamed, and Jenny had "gotten off." Sometime, somehow, Jenny should suffer for it, if he had to pull out her red curls himself in punishment.

So the deep resentment which he had against her grew and grew, and something soon happened to make it grow greater than before.

Not long after this, Frank played his first game of hide-and-go-seek with the Kent children.

He was not yet used to games, and took them very seriously. He was so accustomed to pretending things, sitting quietly at home by the fire or in the garden, and of having them appear almost real, that when he began to "act them out," as it were, it seemed to be coming almost too true. He got greatly excited, and instead of feeling pleasantly interested, he grew slightly feverish over it. At first he couldn't get used to the idea that everything in the game was just pretending, and that when it was over it would be finished with, almost as though it had never been at all. Make-Believe matters lingered with Frank longer and more deeply than with most children.

When Margot whispered,—"Run and hide in the very darkest, farthest place you can, and—pretend you're being chased by robbers! It's more fun!" he really did feel that he was being chased by robbers, and hunted for a hiding-place as if his life did indeed depend upon the safety of the one he found.

It was Jenny,—who always liked to make fun of everybody, and who from the first had treated Frank as though he had been something of a joke anyway,—who that day made him dislike her even more than he had before.

She saw Frank slip down the cellar stairs,—you know, the sort that lead from the outside of the house, not the inside,—and followed him so softly that he did not hear her. He was excited and proud of the hiding place he had chosen, for there was just enough light for him to see his way about dimly, and not enough to show any one else where he was. But—Jenny banged the two cellar doors shut, and left him in pitch darkness. She knew that he could not open them from beneath, and she went away laughing. And afterwards she did not think of it at all, until—

But before I tell you about that, we must see what happened to Frank, shut up in the cellar, in the sort of darkness that not only frightens you but bewilders you, and makes you feel all turned round the wrong way.

The first thing that happened was that something fell with a lot of noise and dust when he jostled against it in the dark. It must have been a pile of something, papers or books, perhaps. When he tried to grope his way for-

ward he stumbled over something, so he sat down on the cellar floor to think. He was angry. Oh, what a pig Jenny was, he said to himself! She knew that games were all new to him, and that this was a strange cellar, anyway. How did she expect him to find his way out through the dark? He did not suppose that she really meant to leave him there forever, to starve to death; and he had sense enough, too, to know that some one would find him before very long, even if Jenny's own heart did not soften and bring her back to release him. Still, the darkness was troublesome, and every minute seemed as long as an ordinary hour. With the cellar doors closed, he could not hear a single sound from outside, either. But after a while, he began to notice all sorts of tiny rustlings, and scratchings, and scamperings about him everywhere.

"Now I wonder," he said to himself, "if it's Fairies or rats?"

"Mice!" said a little squeaky voice so close to him that he jumped.

"Did you speak?" he exclaimed. "Or was it just a squeak?"

"Certainly I spoke!" said the little voice again. "What do you mean, anyway, coming here and frightening us half to death?"

"I didn't mean to frighten you," said Frank, "and I'm not staying here because I like it. And you frightened me!"

"Why?" squeaked the Mouse.

"I didn't know what you were."

"Well, we didn't know what you were either, till we came near enough to look at you."

"But you can't see me."

"Of course we can see you. Every Mouse of any education knows how to see in the dark. You're a horrid Human Being. But even so, we're not afraid of you. You can't see in the dark, can you?—Ah, well, then I may tell you that there are dozens of us here looking at you,—I mean hundreds, or rather thousands. That's something to make you afraid!"

"I don't believe there are anything like a thousand of you here," said Frank. "And anyway, I wouldn't be afraid of mice! You say you didn't know what I was at first. What did you think I was?"

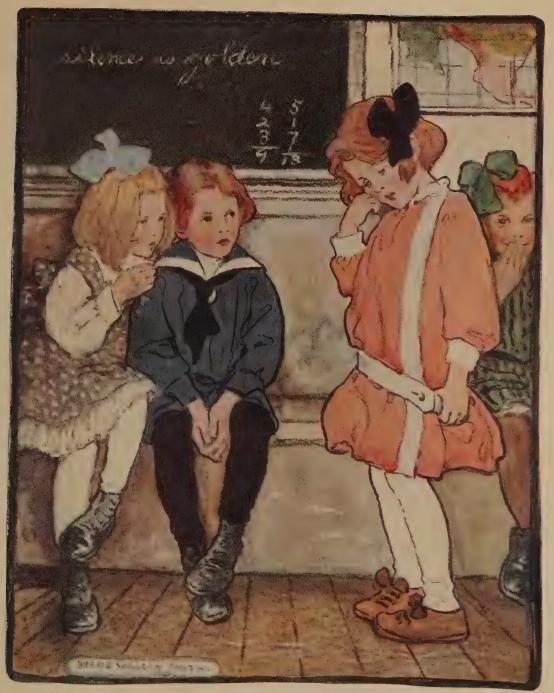
"Something much worse than a Human Being!" The Mouse's voice trembled.

"But what?"

"The Cat!" it said, in a perfect scream of hate.

"Oh, of course!" exclaimed Frank. "You don't like cats."

"Like them! The brutes! Why, I could murder them!"



She came down from the platform, still bravely choking back her tears



"Oh, no, you couldn't!" laughed Frank mischievously. "Maybe you'd like to, but you couldn't!"

The Mouse squeaked twice, as though it could not find words in which to express itself; then it said sharply:

"Don't you be too sure of that! We've won many a victory over the Cats in our day; that's why they're always trying to get even with us."

"So it's a regular war between you, is it? I didn't know that; I thought it was just—just—well, natural, you know. I thought cats chased mice just the way fish catch flies, and—and all that sort of thing."

"You'll find," said the Mouse, in a very grown-up manner, "that there's a reason for everything. When Human Beings—" it spoke as though it were talking about babies or idiots—"don't understand a thing, they just say 'It's nature,' and think they've said all there is to be said about that! Now the trouble between the Mice and the Cats has been going on for so many years that even the Mice,—which have wonderful memories,—cannot many of them remember how it all began. But there's no chance of the matter being settled even now. The Mouse King and the Cat Queen have been trying to arbitrate,—that means settling quarrels without fighting,—but the Mice and Cats themselves hate each other so much that it's no use."

"That's a pity, isn't it?" Frank ventured to say.

"No, it's not a pity!" squealed the Mouse fiercely. "Why should we want peace with our cruel enemies, when, if we keep at it long enough, we can take them all prisoner, and turn them into some use for us? They are very strong, you see, and we can use them as horses, and elephants, and steam-engines, and trains and things."

"They are very big too," suggested Frank. "They might beat you! Every cat is bigger than dozens of mice put together."

"And slower! And stupider! And clumsier! And besides, we should catch them as Kittens. And besides, there are millions more Mice than Cats. And besides—"

"But if they should win-"

"They can't!"

"But if they should win, they'll eat you all up!"

The Mouse chattered with rage.

"Cannibals! Cannibals! Cannibals!—" it squealed, until Frank, in alarm, begged it to stop.

"You know," he said seriously, "I'm afraid you'll have a fit if you keep on like that!"

The Mouse gave two or three shaky squeaks.

"You are right," it said, in a lower voice, which, however, still quavered. "I should control myself, I know. Mice have very excitable natures; it's one of our weakest points. I once knew a Mouse to go crazy just because it couldn't reach a piece of bacon-rind under a glass cover on the kitchen table. It could see it, you know, and the edge of the cover was up a bit so it could smell it,—but it couldn't get it. And so," with a sigh, "it lost its mind, and is considered quite a hopeless case!"

Frank felt that this subject was a painful one and must be changed, so he said: "Tell me about some of your battles with the Cats,—some which the Mice have won, you know."

He was beginning to feel more at home in the black cellar now, and was quite enjoying his chat with the Mouse. If it hadn't been quite so dark he would have liked it better, of course, but then, if it had been light, perhaps the Mouse would not have been so friendly nor talked so freely.

The little thing cleared its throat with a sound like rubbing a glass with a wet finger, and then began:

"You may have heard the story of the Lion and the Mouse?-"

"Oh, yes!" said Frank, rather disappointed. He had hoped that there would be something altogether new in what the Mouse had to tell. "The lion did something nice for the mouse, and to repay him, the mouse gnawed the ropes that tied him so he could get away. Isn't that the fable you mean?"

"Yes," said the Mouse, "but it isn't a fable at all: it's a very important piece of Mouse History. I should know, for the Mouse in the story was an ancestor of mine!"

"But what has it to do with cats?" Frank wished to be told.

There was a pause, which, though it was short, somehow made Frank uncomfortable.

"Do you go to school?" said the Mouse irritably.

"No,-yes,-at least, I've been for a little while,-a very little while."

"If you've been for five minutes I should think you'd know that Cats and Lions are the same thing."

"But-"

"Don't interrupt!" said the Mouse impatiently. "Lions are nothing but extra big Cats; and Cats are nothing but extra small Lions. Now I will go on with the story."

"I didn't know there was any story," said Frank meekly.

"There won't be any," returned the Mouse, "if you keep on talking when you're not expected to!"

Frank sat very still, and after a moment, the Mouse continued:

"That's much better!" It was speaking more mildly. "Now, this was told me by my grandfather, so you can see for yourself that it is true!"

Frank could not see how he should know whether or not the grandfather had been a truthful Mouse, but he wouldn't for worlds have said so.

"He told me," proceeded his invisible friend, "that once when he was a young Mouse, and in command of a large regiment of Mice, he came suddenly upon the enemy,—which was a large House Cat!"

The Mouse spoke as though referring to a Dragon at least.

"Well," said Frank, "and what did he do?"

"The Cat," said the Mouse, with a squeak of savage laughter, (at least, it sounded something like savage laughter), "could not do anything; for it was tangled up in a lot of twine with which it had been playing. And it could not get away.

"'Aha!' said my grandfather. 'So you are caught, are you? And just by your silly and unsuitable habit of running after pieces of string! Aha!'

"The Cat tried to scratch him, but her paw was still held fast in a twist of the twine, and she could only say: 'You silly Mortal—'"

"What!" exclaimed Frank, much amazed. "A mouse a mortal!"

"Well," said his new acquaintance with some embarrassment, "one does not like to hurt people's feelings of course, but I may as well tell you that when we animals want to be particularly insulting to one another, we make use of the term 'Mortal.' It's the worst thing you can possibly say to any Cat or Mouse, to call 'em Mortal!"

"Why, how horrid and impertinent!"—began Frank indignantly. But the Mouse cut him short:

"Well, you say a cowardly man is a *Mouse*, don't you? And a spiteful girl is a *Cat?* And a nasty, low, detestable person a *Dog?* And all the disagreeable acquaintances you have, *Beasts?* And, believe me, none of those names are a bit better suited to the animals than Mortal is when used among us! So there!

"Where was I when you broke in so rudely?—Oh, yes! Well, when the Cat began to abuse my grandfather like that, he said:

"'My sweet-tempered and beautiful Lady Cat, have you never heard that Mice can be useful sometimes?"

"And he began to tell her the story of the Lion and the Mouse. She, as well as you, had heard it; it is wonderful how famous the history of our race has become! She said by the bye that it was the history of her race!

"'I think,' she said proudly, 'that it was very pleasant and very condescending of the Lion to let himself be rescued by a miserable snip of a Mouse!'

"'Oh!' said my grandfather. 'And so of course you would not care to be rescued like that?—Eh?'

"Well, of course she did not like to admit that she would give anything to be rescued, like that or in any other way; but my grandfather was a very clever Mouse. He talked very prettily, and meanwhile he sent messages to the Army; and before she knew it a whole regiment of Mice were scuttling about her, nibbling (or pretending to) at the loops and twists of cord that bound her.

"She looked as though she would have loved to have eaten them, every one of them,—and no doubt she would. But first of all, she wanted to get away. So she smiled,—you know how slyly and wickedly a Cat can smile!—and said: 'You are all very kind to a poor captive! And I am proud to be compared to the celebrated Lion in the story!'

"The Mice said, 'No trouble at all, ma'am!' and chuckled to themselves as they worked about her.

"For, as I suppose you have guessed by this time, they were not trying to set her free at all, but doing everything they could to bind her closer and still more closely in the knots and snarls of twine! There were a great many Mice, and there was a great deal of string, and it was easy to make tangle after tangle until—even the big, stupid Cat saw what was happening!

"'Let me go!' she yowled. 'Let me go!'"

The Mouse tried to imitate a cat meowing, but did not do it very well. "So then the Mice soldiers all began to laugh; and they joined paws and danced around her, singing the Mouse Song of Victory:"

Frank never forgot the song, though he never, try as he would, could manage to remember a whole stanza at a time. It was something like this:

"What do you think of us, Glorious Man? What do you think of us, Cat? You'd like to be dainty like us, if you can, But you have to stay awkward and fat! What do you think of us, Beautiful Cat? What do you think of us, Man?

Of course, you laugh at a Mouse or a Rat,—But you dodge 'em whenever you can!

"What do you think of the work we do?
What do you think of our ways?
Sometimes, I know, we are trying to you,
But we toil while the Kitten-Cat plays!
It isn't your fault that our wits are so fine,
And our Mousey step so light;
The Cat we conquer with knots of twine,
The Man with noises at night!

"Ours is the victory;—what'll you give
To be free once more and lazy?

Of course we're the humblest things that live,
But—you bet we can bother you crazy!"

The Mouse could be heard to draw a deep breath, partly of fatigue and partly of satisfaction.

"Well," said Frank, "and what happened to the Cat then?"

"Ah!" said the Mouse mysteriously. "That is the question!—No, no!" it went on hastily, as though it feared Frank would say something more; "it is better not to speak of it. The Cat—disappeared. But—I think I may say as much as this,—all the Mice babies had new fur coats for Christmas that year!"

"And so the mice won!"

"Well!" exclaimed the Mouse indignantly. "What does it sound like? I should say they did win! It was a splendid victory."

"But there was a regiment of Mice, and only one Cat. Was that fair?"

"We're fairer than Human Beings anyway. They don't wait till the enemy has numbers equal to theirs: they attack anyway. In this case, we only had as many Mice as, lumped together, would equal one Cat! Of course, we had more brains, but in the long run that doesn't count in war."

"Anyway," said Frank stubbornly, "it was a mean trick taking the Cat in like that!"

"The fortunes of war!" said the Mouse, with much cheerfulness.

"Well," said Frank, "my sympathies are with the Cat!"

The Mouse sighed,—a small, squealy sigh.

"Ah! People will always take sides!" it murmured.

Frank felt that perhaps he had not been cordial enough, so he said:

"Then mice are not cowardly?"

He heard a sound like that of a small body jumping violently up and down; when the Mouse spoke, however, it was with comparative calm:

"There never was anything sillier than that 'timid as a Mouse' idea, anyway! You just compare a Mouse's courage with a Mortal's,—I mean according to their different sizes. Suppose you lived in a world where there were monsters hundreds and hundreds of times bigger and stronger than you, with nothing to do but chase you, and trap you, and—"

"But mortals have lots more to do than that!" Frank could not help

saying.

"Really? Sometimes it hardly looks like it. But anyway, I meant nothing important! Nothing but to annoy or even to kill you. Would you be timid? You would! Would you ever dare to show your nose out of your own place where you were safe? You would not! But a Mouse would, and a Mouse does. A Human Being would not let a Giant even catch a glimpse of him if he lived a thousand years; but you alone have seen hundreds of Mice. We even make a little noise about it, just to show we're not afraid. Do you truly suppose we like newspapers and kindling-wood as food? No; it's just to show you that you can't scare us!"

Silence reigned in the cellar. And, after the Mouse had stopped talking, Frank began again to feel worried and panicky. At last he could bear it no longer, and he said in a whisper:

"Mouse,—are you still there?"

The Mouse squeaked cheerfully by way of answer, and Frank was comforted at once.

"Mouse," said he, "you can see in the dark, can't you?"

"Why, of course I can."

"Tell me whereabouts in the cellar I am, and how I can get out. Will you please?—there's a kind Mouse!"

"You are in the corner back of the furnace; and about a ton of old boxes and papers have fallen down in front of you. If you ask me, I should say that it would take a stone-crusher, and a derrick, and a can-opener, and a machine-gun to get you out!"

For a moment, Frank felt desperate. What could he do with a pile of boxes,—he knew there were a lot of them, for he had heard them fall!—between him and even the chance of reaching the open air? He knew that no one could hear him call. The cellar was black and terrifying, in spite of the presence of the consoling Mouse. He could not see where anything was.

It was then that an idea began to form back in his brain somewhere. Before he really knew it, he was remembering the story Motherkin had told about the Kobold; and he was applying it, as best he could, to his own case. Kobolds were made to help you, and if any one ever needed help, he did.

"Mouse," he asked in low, anxious tones, "do you believe in Fairies?"

"Believe in them?" repeated the Mouse, in a puzzled way.

"I mean,—do you think there are such things?" asked Frank.

"I don't think,—I know!" squealed the Mouse. "Where in the world can you have been brought up,—to ask such a question as that?"

"Well, if you are so sure—do you believe in Kobolds?"

"Kobolds? Kobolds? Now, let me think—perhaps not by that name, but— Just what kind of Fairies are Kobolds?"

Hastily and breathlessly, Frank explained, and the Mouse listened with the greatest attention and interest.

"Why, then," it squeaked excitedly and enthusiastically, "all you have to do is to light a fire! That will call your Kobold to the rescue!"

"But," objected Frank, "I'm not sure—not certain sure—that I even have a Kobold!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the Mouse. "You're sure to have!"

"And I am certain sure," proceeded Frank, "that I haven't any matches!—"

"More stuff—and more nonsense!" cried the Mouse. "I'll find the matches, if that's all. Now you shut your eyes, and make up your mind to have a nap; and we'll have you out of here in a twinkling, your Kobold and I!"

It seemed silly to Frank to close his eyes, when he was in the dark already; however, he did what the Mouse told him, and somehow just the shutting of his eyelids made him drowsy. As though from a great distance, he heard a steady, rustling, crackling, gnawing sound, and he knew that the Mouse was busy with something. Then he drifted off into slumber, and noticed nothing more at all. . . .

Once he half woke, seeming dimly conscious of the smell of smoke and a light on his face; but these impressions passed, too, and his sleep was deep and quiet. . . .

The first clear fact that came to him was that he was being carried in somebody's arms, and that the air, from being heavy and stuffy and smoky,—he seemed to have been smelling smoke for ever so long, even in his sleep!

—had become sweet and fresh and cool. People were talking, and a pleasant wind was ruffling his hair.

He opened his eyes, and saw that Mr. Kent was holding him.

"Is he all right?" came Motherkin's voice, eager and very anxious.

"Yes, thank Heaven! How did you happen to get shut in there, old man?"

Frank hesitated. He certainly couldn't give Jenny away.

"We were playing—hide-and-go-seek, and—the cellar doors got shut," he said, faintly.

But another voice,—Jenny's,—spoke from somewhere nearby:

"I shut them, Papa,-for a joke. And then I forgot."

"A joke!" repeated her father sternly. "And if there hadn't happened to be that little blaze to tell us, who knows how long the poor little chap might have stayed there!"

"And as it is,"—Motherkin's voice sounded as though she were speaking through tears, "he might have been burned badly! Oh, Jenny, Jenny!—I wonder who could have left that box of matches there, anyway? And who could have lighted them?"

"Did you try to light the matches, boy?" said Mr. Kent.

"No," said Frank, "it was the Mouse."

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Kent. "I always knew there were ever so many mice down stairs. And they're forever nibbling at things. Though why matches!—Come, dear, I'll take you home to your Aunt!"

Frank did not look to left nor to right, as he went off with Motherkin; somehow he felt too tired even to lift his eyes. He just clung to her hand, and wondered whether he would ever have a chance to thank the Mouse in the Cellar for setting the house on fire and so reminding people of him!

"Good-night, Frankie, dear!" called Margot, heartily and tremulously. They must all have been pretty worried about him.

He could almost have imagined,—was it imagination?—that he heard the irrepressible and heartless Jenny choke back a sob.



"Lady bird, lady bird, fly away home!"
Such a small Fairy, so bravely to roam!
Gay in your armor, as fierce as you please,
Prowling about at the foot of the trees;
Strutting and fighting whatever may come,—
Lady bird, lady bird, fly away home!

Rattle and buzz, and bumble and hum!
Mercy, look at the June Bugs come!
Look at this fellow galumphing around,
Making that blundering, thundering sound!
But he's quiet as an owl when he's at home,
And lives in the ground like a regular Gnome.

"Go to the Ant, and be wise," you know;
Look at her hurrying to and fro;
Working and building and storing away
Food and drink for a hungry day;
When you talk to her you must act just so,
For she is a Witch!— Why, didn't you know?

Of course you can see that it wouldn't do For Elves to be clear to all Mortals' view; So they wear a beetle-and-bug disguise, Except to the children's friendly eyes.

We know they are Fairies, true as true, But for Grown Up People,—it wouldn't do!

Fairies?

CHAPTER VI

FIVE O'CLOCK IN THE GRASS FOREST

ARGOT lay on the ground close to the grey rail-fence at the very farthest end of the orchard, and stared at nothing. The day was quiet, and the shadows of the grape-leaves hardly moved at all. Grape-vines were climbing all over the rail-fence, and big, purple, good-smelling bunches of them hung close to Margot: just close enough to make her feel comfortable and contented and not greedy. She knew she could eat one whenever she wanted to, so she was in no hurry. You know the feeling, don't you?

Where she was lying was in shadow, but just the other side of the fence was a stretch of gold-green grass, dazzling bright in the sun. For it was a hot day, and still, and there was a shimmer upon everything,—except just here in the shadows on the cool side of the grey rail-fence, with the good-smelling grape-bunches all about.

While she was staring at nothing, and thinking about all sorts of things that she did not even know she was thinking about,—all sleepy, jumbled-up things,—Frank came and found her. Margot would have hated to see most people, but she didn't mind Frank. He seemed to belong to her somehow; almost as though he had been a brother, or a Fairy friend, or something comfortable like that.

She turned her head lazily. "Hello!" she said. "Isn't it hot?"

Frank nodded, and plumped down on the grass beside her. He was a very different boy from the pale child who had first met the healthy happy Kents so shyly. Now he was strong enough to play with them *nearly* as long as they wanted him to. And he was almost as brown as Margot herself.

She never could manage to keep a hat on for more than two minutes at a time, and her face was tanned and rosy. Motherkin knew that in summer it was useless to dress the children in clothes that were easily spoiled, so Margot wore a sort of loose gown, something like a pinafore,—such as, in some parts of the globe, the peasants wear and call smocks.

Her legs were bare, and Frank envied her; for he knew the grass must feel nice and cool. Indeed she looked the picture of comfort in spite of the heat. Also she had on her red hair-ribbon. He had learned that Margot only wore the red one when she was in especially good spirits.

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"Look at that thing!" she murmured drowsily. And she pointed to a little green caterpillar crawling up a vine-leaf. "I hate caterpillars and bugs and things like that, don't you?"

"I don't know," said Frank, thoughtfully. "Maybe they're interesting, if you know them." He was naturally of a hopeful disposition. "Isn't it nice here?" he went on. "All those little wiggly shadows look like Fairies dancing in the grass!"

Margot sat up suddenly, as though what he had said reminded her of something. She looked around, to be sure no one was listening, then leaned forward mysteriously.

"See here!" she whispered. "I know something!"

You know how exciting that always sounds. A person doesn't boast of a secret unless a person knows that a person's secret is very much worth while.

"What is it?" murmured Frank, and held his breath for the answer.

"Don't you wish you knew?" said Margot, who was a tease. But she was sorry the next moment; it was no fun to tease Frank, he took things so seriously. "I'll tell you!" she went on quickly. "You are always talking about Fairy things. You think you know all about Them!"

"Fairies?"

Margot nodded. She was a little shy when it came to talking about the Fairies. Frank knew that, deep down in her heart, she was rather afraid of them.

"Well!" she said, the words coming with a rush, "you'll never guess who knows a lot more about them than you!"

"Not-you?"

"No-o-o-o!" Margot sounded scornful. "You know better than that, Frank! They wouldn't have anything to do with me. And—and I don't believe I want them anyway,—for they—they scare me!"

"I know they do. It's funny, too. They're not scary,—only in a nice, creepy way sometimes. I wonder who it is,—who knows them so awfully well, I mean. Is it Motherkin?"

Frank had fallen into the habit of speaking of Mrs. Kent as "Mother-kin" like the rest, though of course he never did when he was talking to her.

"No," said Margaret, shaking her head.

Frank couldn't imagine who it could be. "It—it couldn't be—Jenny?" he said, scowling a little and hesitating. He had never forgiven Jenny, on Margot's account more than his own.

"No! She doesn't even believe in them,—at least, she says she doesn't!"

"Well, I give it up!"

"What'll you give if I tell?" cried Margot, scrambling to her knees with a little chuckle of excitement.

"That's no fair! I gave it up."

"That's so; you did," said Margot, honestly. "'Twouldn't be fair not to tell you. Besides, I meant to anyway. Well,—it's Nancy and Billy?"

She sprang up, and skipped two steps backward and two forward, laughing at his surprise. "Never think it, would you?"

Frank shook his head.

"Why," he said, "they're just-kids!"

This was still a new word to him, one which he had learned from the Kents.

"Of course Billy is," said Margaret. "Nancy's almost as old as you and I are. Only I know she *seems* sort of like a kid. Anyway, she and Billy-Boy have a Party Place.—"

"A what?" interrupted Frank.

"A Party Place. A place where they give a party,—or at least it sounds like it. It's a sort of bunch of green twisty leaves and stems with round things growing on 'em,—something like these, only greenish,—" (Margaret was trying to describe a wild grape vine). "And Nancy and Billy creep in underneath, and you can hear them talking away—"

"How do you know they aren't talking to each other?"

"Because—once I followed them and I listened! So there!" She looked at him defiantly. "I know it was wicked, but I did! And I heard Billy-Boy say: 'Oh, Mr. Snap, I wish you'd show us again how you jump!' And then I heard Nancy give a little squeal, and say: 'Oh, there he goes!'— Only, of course she said 'goeth.' And then there was a funny little pop! Now! Doesn't that sound like—Fairies?" Margot paused for breath.

Frank nodded. To think that Nancy,—quiet, 'fraid-cat little Nancy,—and Billy, that baby, should be on friendly terms with any of the Little People! Frank felt quite annoyed. Here he had been thinking all along that if any one was going to be favoured by the Good Folk he would be that one; and yet he didn't know any of them well enough to call them by name, and probably never would. "Mr. Snap" indeed! He made up his mind to find out all about it.

"Wonder where they are now?" he said.

"I know," returned Margot. "Just where they are every afternoon—at their Party Place."

"Let's go and see if they are!" suggested Frank.

And Margot clapped her hands.

"Let's!" she cried excitedly. "I'll show you the way!"

Quite forgetting the heat, they ran off together in the sunshine.

The mysterious country on the North side of Auntie Sue's Garden was no longer mysterious to Frank, except as everything is mysterious with the possibilities of things that might happen. But he seldom wandered very far even now. He had never before been to the cool shadows at the far end of the golden-lighted meadow. He felt quite adventurous when he and Margot reached the tangle of wild grape-vines where Nancy and Billy, it seemed, hid and chattered in secret,—whether with the Fairy Folk or no, who could say?

This time, Margot's guilty conscience and her natural honesty would not let her play eavesdropper, so when she had reached the "Party Place" she pushed aside the nearest vines with quick fingers, and cried:

"Oh, Nancy! Don't think we are pigs, for finding you out, but do tell

us about it! Won't you, please?"

There was a faint scream from Nancy, and Billy said quite crossly:

"I knew they'd bother us!"

But Frank spoke too: "Please, Nancy!" he begged. "We won't tell any one!"

And Nancy said: "You can crawl in, if you thtoop down very low!-

Oh, what wath that?"

"That" was her sister Jenny appearing, red-headed and laughing as usual, at a green-framed opening in the vine-tangle.

"Aha!" she exclaimed cheerfully. "I've caught you all together!

Now, what's it all about?"

When the five of them were sitting hunched up together in the wee scrap of a grassy space under the wild grape vine at the edge of the meadow, Nancy explained timidly. She and Billy had merely been watching bugs and beetles and insects generally; and that was why they had kept to themselves so much at first. Most people didn't like beetles and bugs as companions.

"And then," finished Nancy earnestly, "I got to thinking that they

might be Fairies,-if only one knew how to find out!"



She knew she could eat one whenever she wanted to, so she was in no hurry



Jenny laughed more loudly than usual, but Margot sat up straight with a quick exclamation.

"Do you remember something Motherkin said once?" she said in an excited undertone. "About Fairy things happening so much better if you closed your eyes—"

"Yeth, Yeth!" said Nancy eagerly. "Oh, let'th try it! Let'th!"

Now, at five o'clock exactly (which is when it takes five puffs to blow away the fluff of a gone-to-seed dandelion), if you shut your eyes on a warm summer afternoon, and sit still and listen, you will hear the Fairies, and friends and kin of theirs, having afternoon tea. They will not show themselves to you, and even if you look at them closely you may only see grass-hoppers and flies and beetles and other little things of that sort. But with your eyes closed you can hear them talk together, and rustle their leafy table-cloths; and sometimes you may— But try it sometime, and see.

When our five children tried it, they had a very odd experience.

First, almost as soon as their eyes were shut, they began to hear strange little sounds, quite unlike any they had ever heard before. Then, as they still sat in darkness, the little sounds grew more and more confused, and fainter at the same time, until. . . .

... "Will you have some tea?" said a voice close by.

It was a small voice, but very polite.

"May I open my eyes now?" Frank asked eagerly.

"Certainly! Five o'clock has puffed!"

Frank opened his eyes and looked around him. What had happened? The grape vine tangle seemed to have gone entirely,—though there was an enormous shadow something the shape of a giant leaf. All about him grew long green things ever and ever so much taller than himself, straight like spears, splinters, or—blades of grass! That was it, of course! He was in a forest made of hundreds and hundreds of blades of grass! But were they so enormous, or was he just small? He could not make up his mind. Indeed he never was able to decide, even long afterwards, whether the Fairies had made the grass grow big for the occasion or made him grow little!

At any rate, there he sat among the gigantic green blades, and all about him sat the other four children, with—the queerest collection of creatures Frank had ever imagined. They looked familiar in some way, and yet he was sure that he had never met such extraordinary monsters before.

They were as big as he was, and they were shaped,—now, what were

they shaped like? One was black, one light brown, one grey with two big black circles on its back, one was striped black and yellow, and one was quite a bright red. They all had shiny shells whatever the colour; they all had goggle eyes and long wavy things not unlike horns sticking out from their foreheads; and they all had several legs; more than one would have thought they would be likely to need. Now do you wonder that to the children they looked more dreadful and more queer than any Dragons or Gryphons of which they had seen pictures in story books?

But perhaps you have already guessed what they were? If so, you know that, as a matter of fact, they were quite harmless creatures. They only looked like monsters because they were as large and larger than the little mortals.

"Did you say tea?" demanded Jenny, looking around her.

"And which of you spoke?" asked Margot, more politely.

"I—I'm frightened!" whimpered Billy-Boy.

Nancy said, very gently:

"Pleathe, who ith giving thith tea-party?"

"I am," spoke up the grey creature with the black spots. He waved his horns gracefully as he spoke. "I," he went on, with a very grand air indeed, "am known as the Great Eyed Elater; and my family is the Capricorn, which means Goat. Germans call me the Fiddler. Now, I want to ask you an important question: which do you think I look most like,—a Goat or a Fiddler?" And he turned from one to the other.

This was a puzzling question.

"Why, really,—" said Frank, doubtfully,—"I don't think you look much like either. If you please, why do they call you a Goat?"

"Because of my horns, you know," explained the Great Eyed Elater, waving them again.

"But surely you don't fiddle?" said Jenny.

The Monster suddenly lifted a pair of heavy wings which they had not seen before. They seemed to be made double, for under the heavy shiny, shell-covered ones, were hidden a second pair, much more delicate and soft, and of a prettier colour. With the outside wings the Elater made a scrapy, squeaky noise.

"That's why!" he remarked proudly.

"You needn't be so stuck-up about it!" spoke up a dark-blue Thing near by. "I can do that too! Lots of us can!"

"Be quiet!" commanded the Great Eyed Elater, with dignity. "I am

giving this party! And besides, I'm the biggest." Which was quite true.

Nancy had been staring at him in a puzzled way, as if she were trying to remember where she had seen him before. Suddenly she cried:

"I know who you are now! Billy,—can't you thee?"

The little boy stared too, and then he also looked excited. "It looks,—" he cried,—"why, Nancy,—it looks—"

"It ith!" exclaimed Nancy decidedly. And to the grey Creature, she said: "If you pleathe, you're Mithter Thnap!"

"There!" said the grey and black Monster, turning to the other Monsters. "I told you they'd recognise me! Quite right, my dear young lady; I am, as you put it, Mr. Snap!"

Frank's eyes and mouth were opening wider and wider.

"Why—why—" he gasped,—"you're all just bugs and beetles!"

The Creatures nodded their shiny heads and waved their legs or arms,—whichever they were,—and waggled their horns.

"Beetles," they all declared in chorus. "Coleoptera!"

"Colly-colly-what?" said Margot, breathless with interest.

"--Optera."

"But what on earth's that?" said Jenny impatiently.

"Beetles!" they all stated again.

"If you pleathe,—" it was Nancy who was speaking,—"why did you thay you were the—what wath it?—the Great Eyed—"

"Elater? Elater means, roughly speaking, a person who lifts himself; I'll show you by and bye."

"But-but you haven't great eyeth-"

"Your eyes is small!" declared Billy.

"It's because of these black things on my back."

"But why do they call them eyes, when they aren't?" persisted Jenny.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Mr. Snap pleasantly. "Have some tea?"

Possibly he did not know, but possibly he was getting tired of so many questions; he well might be!

The "tea" was a queer tasting liquid, which had been made, the Elater explained, from a mixture of partridge-berries, catnip, wild grape juice and hay. It tasted a little of all these things. It was served in tiny flower cups, with pollen cakes which were sweet and not at all bad. There was a huge gone-to-seed dandelion close at hand, and the Beetles seemed to consult it now and then as to time. Whenever a puff of wind blew off a bit of fluff, some one would say "Six puffs after five!—" or "twenty puffs" as the case

might be. It was wonderful, how they kept such careful count, but no one seemed to forget nor to become mixed as to whether the puff were the sixteenth or the eighteenth.

"Now," said Mr. Snap, when they had finished the tea and cake, "we will have an entertainment in your honour."

He lifted his clumsy wings and made them squeak.

"That's to call the real Fiddler!" he said.

The next instant, along came a huge Grasshopper, whom the grey Beetle introduced as his "big cousin." He added, apologetically: "Later in the season I could have gotten Madame Katy-Did for you,—a really great artist,—but she never accepts an engagement before August. However, my cousin is one of the best musicians we have!"

The Grasshopper seemed a good-natured, awkward, stupid sort of Thing, much embarrassed by so large an audience. But he sat down in the centre of the group, lifted one long strong leg, and began to scrape away with it on the hard shell of his outer wing. It really did look something like a crazy fiddler playing on a crazy violin, but the noise!— You have all heard the racket made by grasshoppers in the grass on a hot day? Well, please try to fancy what it would sound like, if each grasshoper were twice as big as you were!

The children wanted to put their fingers in their ears, but that would have been bad manners, when the Creatures were all trying to entertain them.

After the Grasshopper's performance, there were wrestling feats and heavy-weight lifting by ugly, fat, strong giants called Tumble Bugs; and a pretty chorus of Crickets; and a drill of Bombadeir Beetles,—there really are such things, though you may not know it!—each one firing a tiny pistol at the word of command.

And then the Great Eyed Elater himself gave them a very fine acrobatic exhibition, jumping up in the air twice and even three times his own length, turning over in back summersaults, and doing other things far more remarkable than anything we see at the Circus.

The last of all was a song sung by all of the Beetles, and very odd it sounded:

"The Beetles are giving a party,
The Beetles are having a tea:
They're doing their best
For every guest,
For they're fond of com-pan-ee!

The Butterflies sent to the Beetles
A message polite and hearty:
'Will you all come to dine?'
But they had to decline,
Because they were giving a party!

"The Beetles are popular Creatures;
They're invited by hundreds of Elves;
But they proudly refuse,
Whenever they choose,—
They give so many parties themselves!
'At Court,' said the Queen of the Fairies,
'You'll find a welcome most hearty!'
But they answered, 'Oh, no!—
We simply can't go,
For WE are giving a party!'"

When the song was finished, the Elater added: "We are very proud. All Beetles are very proud."

"I don't wonder," said Margot, much impressed.

"And you really know the Fairies?" asked Frank.

All the Beetles laughed at this. But Nancy was the one who cried: "I believe they're Faireth themthelveth, only they don't want uth to know it!"

Immediately there arose a confused noise, as of many voices all talking at the same time:

"... You are not allowed to say that! ... Hush,—hush! ... You must go now! ..."

And finally one clear command came,—it would be hard to say just who had given it:

"You must shut your eyes again and keep them shut until you have counted thirteen. And, afterwards, you must never talk even among yourselves, of the tea-party you have been to to-day!"

With his eyes tight shut, Frank began to count.

. . . He did not remember even saying thirteen. It seemed a long time later that he opened his eyes, with a queer, drowsy feeling, and found the other four opening theirs.

The sun was low, and the red rays shone under the green tangle of wild grape vines straight into the Party Place. A little breeze had risen and grown, and all the white fluff of the gone-to-seed dandelions had blown away.

"That's a silly sort of game, I think!" said Jenny, yawning. "Oh, dear, —I feel stretchy! Did any one dream anything?"

"Dream!-" began Margot indignantly.

Jenny burst out laughing. "I suppose you'll be saying you were not asleep next!" she said.

"I wasn't!" cried Margot. "I saw-"

"Oh, don't! Pleathe don't!" pleaded Nancy anxiously, putting her hand on her cousin's arm. "Remember!—"

Nobody spoke, but everybody looked at each other. Frank opened his lips to say something, but he remembered what that last voice had said in warning, and was silent.

"They said we must never talk about the tea party," he thought, "and if we do, we may never be allowed to have anything to do with the Fairies any more. Besides, it wouldn't be right, after they'd asked us not to!"

Nobody said a word about it. I wonder if they were all thinking the same thing?



"If wishes were horses, then beggars would ride!"
But I'm sure all beggars for horses long;
If wanting could do it there'd be a song
On every one's lips, whenever they tried.

If wishes were goodies, then all would feast;
But think how bad it would be for them!
If wanting could bring it, there'd be a gem
For not only the great, but also the least.

If wishes were horses,—if wishes were gold,—
No one would trudge, none would be poor;
If wishes were wits, we'd be always sure
To know our lessons before we're told.

But just suppose you had the gem,—
The horse,—the song,—the goodies,—the gold,—
And they all were yours to keep and hold,
And—you didn't know what to do with them!

Suppose, when the wishes came really true,

The beggar didn't know how to ride?

. . . In spite of our dreams of greed and pride,

I think we're best as we are,—don't you?

Clarinda's True Wishes.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF THE LITTLE GIRL WHO WAS ALWAYS WISHING

of making her stories point a moral very nicely.

"Oh, I wish it would never rain!" complained Jenny, when a shower interfered with a picnic for which they had all been planning.

"Take care," laughed Mrs. Kent, "that the Fairies don't hear you wishing absurd things like that, and take you at your word one of these days. Like poor Clarinda!"

They all wanted to know what happened to Clarinda, so she told them this story:

"Once upon a time there was a little girl named Clarinda, and she was always wishing for things that she could not have. In fact, she was quite discontented, which is a wrong thing, and a very uncomfortable thing, for any child to be. Nearly all little boys and girls, of course, want things that it is hard or even impossible to get for them, but that does not mean that they have to be dissatisfied and complaining when they don't get them. If they are good and sensible, they just make the best of it, and often find out that the things that they can have are just as nice really as the things that they would like to have,—and, usually, ever so much better for them!

"But Clarinda fretted over everything. And she was the most envious little girl who ever lived. Whenever she saw a child with a very splendid toy, or a pet kitten, or a pretty new dress, she immediately wanted one just like it. She quarrelled with her best little girl friend, Matilda, because Matilda's aunt had given her a doll with a particularly beautiful curly yellow wig, and Clarinda's own doll had hair that was only brown and straight!

"And she cried herself nearly sick when she saw a little boy she knew riding a Shetland pony. Her mother told her that the little boy's parents were rich, and could easily afford to buy Shetland ponies, while they could not. But Clarinda only cried harder than before, because she had had the bad luck to have a Papa and Mamma who were poor! I think she was a very disagreeable little girl, and I am sure that she must have been a most unhappy one as well, for it is dreadful always to want more than you have.

"The Fairies, who are, of course, always anxious to help all children in

all their troubles, talked the matter over among themselves, and decided that the only thing to be done with Clarinda was to give her a lesson which she would not forget.

"So one summer day, when she was sitting in the hammock, trying to amuse herself with an old Atlas and not succeeding at all well, a Fairy flew out of a morning-glory vine near by, and alighted on the edge of the book which she was holding. It was a real, regular Fairy, with gauzy wings and a tiny wand.

"'Gracious!" exclaimed Clarinda, nearly dropping the book, Fairy and

all, in her excitement. 'What in the world are you?'

"'I am a Fairy, of course!' explained the little creature,—it was no higher than a baby dandelion. 'Don't you know anything about Fairies?'

"'Not much,' said Clarinda, 'but I have always wanted to see one.'

"'Ah!' said the Fairy, nodding wisely. 'Well, I have heard that you are always wishing for something, and here is one wish granted, anyway! Maybe you'll be sorry for that before you're through, though. It's not always pleasant to get what you want, you know, Clarinda.'

"'Oh, that can't be so!' cried the little girl. 'I'm sure that it must be

the loveliest thing in the world to always get your wishes!'

"'Are you so sure indeed?' said the Fairy. 'Well, we will just try, and see whether or not you are right. For a whole week you shall have one wish granted every day,—but mind you, whatever you wish will have to last for the entire day; don't forget that.'

"'Every single day?' gasped Clarinda.

"'Every single day,' replied the Fairy.

"'And-whatever wish I make?"

"'Yes. Anything at all. But only one a day, and only for one week.'

"Clarinda stared at him; she simply could not believe it could be true.

"'Fairy,' she said, 'are you sure you are not making fun of me?"

"'Well, maybe I am making a little fun of you, but it's quite serious fun, as you'll find out before the end of the week! Now you may as well wish your first wish.— And for goodness' sake don't do the silly things that the people in story books always do, when the Fairies give them three wishes. Wish carefully, and wish for something that you really and truly want.'

"Something I really and truly want!" repeated Clarinda, thinking

deeply. 'But, Fairy, I want so many things!'

" 'That's the best of it!' said the Fairy.

"'How do you mean "That's the best of it"?' asked the little girl.

'You mean that's the worst of it, don't you? I certainly shall never be able to get all the things I want in one week!' And she spoke regretfully already!

"'Well, you are greedy!' said the Fairy. 'But, as I say, that's the best of it. You'll get so many things that you've been wishing for that before the week is out, unless I am much mistaken, you'll be glad to live just your ordinary life again!'

"'Oh, no, that's nonsense!' she cried confidently. 'I couldn't have too many of the things I want!'

"'Well, try it and see,' suggested the Elf.

"Clarinda considered.

"'Now, what shall I wish first?' she said, half to herself and half to the Fairy. 'Shall I wish for a puppy, like the Brown boy's? It is such a dear! Or shall I wish for a—' Her eyes fell on the Atlas still lying on her lap. 'I know!' she cried excitedly. 'Only—Oh, Fairy, you're sure that you mean I can have any wish,—any at all?'

"The Fairy nodded.

"Clarinda clapped her hands, with a little scream of joy. Then she began to trace the lines of the map that was on one page of the Atlas. 'This is what I am going to wish for!' she declared.

"'What?" asked the Fairy, not understanding at once.

"T've always wanted to see foreign countries,' explained Clarinda, breathless with eagerness. T've always wanted to go to the wonderful places that are in this geography book! So now I'm going!"

"'But don't you think you ought to let your father and mother know first?' said the Fairy, looking as if he would have liked to chuckle at some joke that Clarinda could not see yet.

"'No,-no!' she cried impatiently. 'I want to go now,-at once, please, Fairy!'

"'Well, pick out the place, and make your wish then,' said the Fairy, adding, with a shake of his head,—'You selfish girl!'

"Clarinda hesitated between two countries close together on the map. Then she drew a deep breath and decided:

"'I wish—I wish to be a little Japanese girl in Japan!"

"No sooner had the words left her lips than something strange happened to the lawn and trees about her. Everything seemed to change and shrink, and grow to a different shape. What had been oaks and elms and poplars now looked odd and crooked like the trees you see on Japanese fans and tea-

pots. And in the distance she saw a great white hill shaped something like a tent, against the bright blue sky. She knew from the geography books that it was Fuji, the famous snow-capped mountain of Japan. So her wish had really come true!

"The house and grounds of her own home had vanished. On each side of her were queer little buildings which looked as light and thin as paper boxes. They seemed made of squares, one fitting into another, and once in a while some one would slide a square aside, as though it were a screen or a folding door. People were passing, dressed in queer clothes of pretty colours. She looked down at her own dress, and found it was of greyish blue cotton, with a purple sash.

"There were a great many children, but they did not laugh nor play nor romp like the children Clarinda knew; they walked along very quietly and solemnly, like grown up people, and they made no noise. Instead of shoes, they had queer wooden things strapped onto their feet, which looked like little stands or frames, and were most uncomfortable;—she knew, for she had a pair on too! Somewhere in the back of her brain Clarinda remembered that in some parts of the world people wore what were called 'clogs.'

"Most of the children whom she saw walking about carried smaller children on their backs; the very little babies were tucked into the back of their sashes, and even they did not cry. And while she was looking at all this, and wondering about it, she was suddenly conscious of a heavy weight on her own back. She was carrying a baby about with her too!

"A little boy in a funny reddish brown cotton garment was passing, and stopped and said:

"'What is the matter, honourable little girl?"

"She did not know any of the Japanese language,—at least she did not when she was Clarinda,—but she understood him perfectly well. She supposed that that must be the Fairy's doing.

"'I am lost, and I am tired,' she said,—and again, though she thought she spoke English, the little boy understood her and nodded gravely.

"'What is your name?' he said.

"She did not know what to say to this, so she said nothing. The little boy smiled and said: 'I shall call you O Haru!' And somehow Clarinda knew without being told that O Haru meant 'the Spring.'

"The little boy took her and the baby that was tied onto her back home to his mother's house, and explained that her name was O Haru, and that he



She was sitting in the hammock, trying to amuse herself with an old Atlas, and not succeeding at all well

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STORY OF LITTLE GIRL WHO WAS ALWAYS WISHING 69

had found her and her little sister wandering about in the streets. The mother was a kind person, but Clarinda thought she must be very severe, for the little boy fell on his knees when he saw her, and bumped his forehead on the floor, and evidently expected Clarinda to do the same.

"It was terribly hot, for there were queer, round metal pans or bowls on sticks, with red hot coals burning in them, and everything was shut up close. The Japanese mother, who wore a dark blue kimono like one that Clarinda's mother wore as a wrapper, prepared the supper. There was raw fish, hot rice, melon pickles, and tea. And she had to drink the tea out of little cups that were without handles and that burned her fingers, and to eat the food with two thin, slippery sticks they called chopsticks. It was hard to get even a tiny bit of anything as far as her mouth, and everything tasted horrid anyway.

"'Oh,' thought Clarinda, 'how I wish I could stop this wish right now! But the Fairy said it would have to last for the whole day!"

"She said nothing, and ate so little that the boy's mother was quite disgusted with her.

"'She is a stupid child, and an ill-mannered one,' she said at last, 'and I think that she is dirty as well.'

"So Clarinda was given a bath.

"Of course, she was used to warm baths every night at home, but this was quite a different matter. It was not warm, but hot, and more than hot! The Japanese take their baths at a temperature of anywhere from one hundred and fifteen to one hundred and thirty degrees, and like it; but we are used only to tubs of water a little over a hundred, and anything hotter makes us feel half-scalded. Clarinda screamed so loudly that the Japanese mother took her out of the bath hastily, and scolded her severely for making a noise, —Japanese children are never allowed to make a noise no matter how much they are hurt. Then she put her to bed.

"That meant lying down on a hard couch, with her head on a block of wood instead of a pillow. She did not know what had become of the mysterious baby that had been hung on her back.

"'Oh, why did I ever think it would be nice to be a little Japanese girl?' moaned Clarinda. 'It's simply awful!'

"It was so hot she could hardly breathe, and the hard wood hurt the back of her neck, but she was so tired that her eyes closed in spite of herself. And when she opened them—the Japanese house had disappeared, and instead of a piece of wood there was a real pillow under her head! And I simply can-

not begin to tell you how glad she was to find herself in her own bed at home!

"The next morning, as soon as she opened her eyes, there was her friend the Fairy, sitting on the wooden foot of the bed looking at her rather mockingly,—or so she thought.

"Well,' he said cheerily, 'and what have we in mind for to-day?"

"Clarinda was relieved that he did not ask her embarrassing questions as to the success of her first wish. They might have proved hard to answer;—but then, being a Fairy, he probably knew all about it anyway, without asking!

"She sat up in bed and yawned.

"'Well,' she said, 'there's a children's party that Mother wanted me to go to, but I suppose I needn't now that I can have whatever I wish.'

"'Why don't you want to go?' asked the wee person on the foot of the

bed.

"Clarinda felt somewhat ashamed of her reason for not wanting to go, but it seemed rather silly and useless to tell stories to a Fairy, so she answered truthfully:

"'I don't want to go to the party because Matilda Jones has a prettier dress than mine! Hers is blue and white with lace, and Mother wants me to wear an old white one, quite plain, and—' she stopped for breath, and the Elf remarked in a matter-of-fact way:

"'Well, it seems to me that all *that* will be very easy. This is your Wish Week, you know, and you can just as well have a blue and white frock with lace, if you want it enough to waste a wish on it."

"'Oh!' shrieked Clarinda happily. 'Of course I can! I never even thought of it! I will,—only the dress will be pink and white with lace, instead of blue, because pink is more becoming to me. I wish—for a pink and white gown with lace, prettier than any other at the party!'

"And even in the very moment of hopping out of bed she gave another rapturous cry; for there on a chair, waiting for her to put it on, was the daintiest little gown imaginable: all fluffy, feathery lace, and transparent muslin, and delicate silk, and rose-coloured satin ribbons! And there were silk stockings, and slippers with big rosettes.

"'Oh, it's perfectly lovely!' sighed Clarinda. 'It's just exactly what I

wished for. Fairy, I wouldn't have it changed one single bit!"

"'Yes, I know it's what you wished for,' said the Fairy, looking at the dress. But even Clarinda in her glad excitement could realise that his tone was not enthusiastic. 'However,' he went on, 'it may not be so long before

you'll be more than willing to have it changed. I think your father and mother would like it changed now;—I know I should, if I were they!'

"For, indeed, it was not at all a suitable dress for a little girl to wear even to the biggest party, and down in the bottom of her heart Clarinda herself knew that; but she did not care. She wanted to look more 'dressed up' than any other child at the party; she wanted everybody there to notice her. And so they did, but not entirely for the reasons that she wished and expected!

"It was an out-of-door party, and the children played and romped all over the lawn, and had so much fun that they did not notice the thunderstorm that was coming up faster and faster, and blacker and blacker. And then there was a big flash of lightning, and a crash, and the rain began to pour down as though there never had been any rain on earth since the Flood!

"The children, screaming and scampering like half-drowned kittens, hurried to the house of the people who were giving the party. Most of them wore simple, washable white things that could not be hurt by the rain. The dresses and suits were a little limp, but that was all; and every one laughed good-humouredly over the ducking they had had, until—some one caught sight of Clarinda! And then the merry laughter changed completely, and every one gasped, and giggled, and then choked down the giggles, not wanting to be rude.

"For the lace on Clarinda's dress was like so much snarled-up thread that had been left a long time in a bowl of water; and the silk and satin were sticky-looking and stringy; and the pink had run, in dreadful blotchy streaks, all over the white. And she had gotten a great deal of mud on the slippers and silk stockings, and one rosette was lost. Altogether, she was a very wretched-looking little girl, and she could not help crying as she was hurried home to supper and bed. Certainly her second wish had been a hopeless failure,—just about as much of a failure as the first!

"As she fell asleep she made up her mind that next time she would try a wish that was entirely different; something simple and humble, though interesting of course, with no foreign countries in it, nor fine feathers.

"When the Fairy asked her on Wednesday,—which was the next day,—what she wanted to do, she said promptly: 'I want to be a Gipsy!'

"Well, she became a Gipsy,—for that day. And if she could have taken back her wish an hour after she had made it, she would have done it; but alas! The dreadful thing had to last until bed-time! And it very nearly killed her; or she thought it did, which comes to much the same thing.

"Children have an idea that Gipsies lead delightful lives, wearing queer,

quaint clothes and gold bracelets and ear-rings, sleeping in funny big wagons, telling fortunes, and wandering through woods that are full of adventures of all kinds. But Clarinda saw quite a different side of it, I assure you.

"In the first place, the Gipsies seemed to take her quite as a matter of course, just as the Japanese had. Of course, that too may have been part of the Fairy's doings. But one thing was certain: they were not one bit nicer to her than they would have been to any strange little girl who had strayed into their band. They ordered her about in what seemed to her a very cruel way, and one awful old woman, with a red handkerchief on her head and no teeth, beat her with a stick. As Clarinda had never been struck before, she liked it even less than most children would.

"And the dogs belonging to the Gipsy tribe would not make friends, but barked at her and tried to bite her; and the Gipsies would not let her ride in any of the big caravan wagons, but made her trudge along behind, barefooted in the stony, dusty road, until her legs ached and her feet were sore.

"When they stopped to eat she was given a little wooden bowl of soup which left her just as hungry as she was when she began it; and directly afterward the Gipsy caravan moved on once more, with poor Clarinda trotting along behind in the dust.

"She walked and walked and walked, until she could not feel nor see nor

think any longer. . . .

"And then—she turned over in bed, and felt cool clean sheets about her, and knew that another day was past, and that she had seen the last of the Gipsies!

"Almost before she was awake next morning, she heard the flutter of the

Fairy's wings, and said at once without even opening her eyes:

"T'm never going to walk any more,—never! I walked a million miles yesterday while I was a Gipsy. After this, I want a horse!"

"Then she gave a jump, and looked eagerly at the Fairy.

"'I forgot that!' she cried. 'I've been wishing for a pony like Eddie Brown's, and now I can have it, can't I, Fairy?'

"'Certainly,' said the Fairy, smiling in a most obliging way. 'When you go downstairs you will find the pony waiting for you.'

" 'Already!' she exclaimed.

"Springing out of bed, she ran to the window to look, and there to be sure was the prettiest and sturdiest of little Shetland ponies hitched to a post in the driveway."

"'Oh, he is a darling!' she cried. 'Thank you,-you dear Fairy!'

"But the Fairy had gone.

"The pony was a darling one, most friendly apparently, and very pretty, and when Clarinda was mounted upon his back she felt herself the proudest and happiest little girl in the world.

"'Well,' she said to herself, as she rode out of the gate and down the road, 'this time my wish has turned out perfectly! I couldn't have asked for a lovelier—'

"But with that a rabbit ran across the road, and frightened the pony out of his wits. He gave a funny little rear, and then a funny little jump to one side, and then away he went down the road, racing as fast as the rabbit itself would have raced if the hounds had been chasing it! No one ever saw that pony again, so I suppose he went back to Fairyland. And as for Clarinda, she stayed on his back about two seconds after he started to run, and then bounced off into a clump of bushes at the side of the road!

"She was not badly hurt, only bruised and much shaken, and so cross and disappointed that she could gladly have shaken the Fairy and boxed his ears! What was the good of a wish if it couldn't turn out nicely once in a while? And what was the good of a Fairy if he could not attend to wishes in a proper manner? She wished she had another Fairy,—any other Fairy; they couldn't all be so unsatisfactory, she felt sure.

"There she was, wishing again, you see! She could not even be content when she got what she asked for!

"She was in a horrid temper when the Fairy appeared in the morning. She was still lame and sore from her fall, and she scolded the Elf until the little thing shook with laughter. The tears ran down his cheeks, and his wings nearly wilted from fatigue after his fit of merriment.

"You poor, silly girl! he said. You are learning your lesson hard! Never mind, you'll meet with worse than this before the week is over. Come now! This is a nice, bright Friday morning; what do you want to do to-day?"

"Clarinda choked back a sob. She didn't want to do anything at all, really; but she would not give in. So she said:

"'Well, I've had enough of travelling, and walking, and parties, and riding. I think to-day I'd like a boat,—a beautiful little boat with a white sail.'

"'Have you sailed much?' enquired the Fairy gravely.

"'Never at all,' she said. 'That's why I've always wished—'

"The Fairy's amusement was so great that he had to take a flight around the room before he could calm himself.

"'I see!' he said, as soon as he could speak. 'So you wish for a boat, Clarinda?'

"'Yes, Fairy,' she answered. 'To-day I wish for a boat.'

"She got it. Before she really knew what had happened to her, she was sitting in the stern of a delightful little sail-boat, with the waves dancing and sparkling all about her, and a delicious salt breeze in her face.

"'Oh, but this is lovely!' she cried. 'I always knew I should love sail-

ing. Why didn't I wish for this before?-'

"And exactly at that moment the beautiful little sail-boat began to pitch and toss, and the spray spattered all over Clarinda, and she was frightened and very sea-sick; and the next moment the boat capsized, and she found herself sputtering and gasping in the coldest water you can fancy! She had never known any water could be so cold without ice in it.

"Of course, it being a Fairy adventure, nothing happened to her beyond her scare and her chattering teeth, but she felt too discouraged and miserable for words when she ducked her head under the sheet that night. Safe at home she thought sadly that she would like to spend at least a month recovering from the effects of her wishes.

"But she knew that she could not escape the Fairy, however wretched she might be feeling, so she turned bravely to greet him when morning came.

"He perched as usual on the foot of the bed, looking very well and

bright.

"'Suppose,' he said, as though trying politely to be sympathetic, 'you wish for something quite restful and commonplace to-day? You look worn out,—really you do!'

"'I'm afraid to wish for anything any more!' poor Clarinda said wearily. Everything turns out so badly! I think I'll just stay at home to-day and

rest and do nothing at all.'

The Fairy hesitated, and then with rather a wicked gleam in his eye, he said: 'A very good idea,—especially as you still have a last wish left for tomorrow. But surely you can think of something that would make things pleasanter for you while you are resting to-day?'

"She shook her head. But he persisted:

"'Story books?—Toys?—No?—Nothing at all? Not something good to eat, perhaps?"

"Clarinda thought this over. She was, like most little girls, very fond

of sweets, but her mother did not approve of them except in small quantities. Clarinda wondered if this might not be her best, if not her only chance to eat as much sweet stuff as she pleased! She paused only for a second: then she grew reckless.

"'I wish,' she announced firmly, 'to have just as much molasses candy, and soda-water, and cake, and jam, and cookies, and tarts, and gingerbread. and popcorn balls, and chocolate, and taffy, and macaroons, and sugar buns, and ice cream, and candied fruit, as I can eat,—all day!"

"The Fairy stared at her, with his eyes and his mouth growing rounder and larger with every word she said. Then he gasped out:

"'I only hope, I'm sure, that it doesn't kill you!"

"He waved his wand, rather feebly it seemed to Clarinda, and flew hastily away as though really he were afraid to look on any longer.

"When she turned her head, she saw that there was a tray upon the table beside her bed. And these are a few of the things that were on it:

"A large plum cake with frosting.

"A plateful of peanut brittle.

"Two pounds of mixed candy.

"Three big cakes of chocolate.

"A box of marshmallows.

"A box of gingersnaps.

"A large dish of strawberry ice-cream.

"Two bottles of ginger ale.

"A great quantity of cookies, gumdrops, candied cherries, raspberry tarts, stuffed prunes, preserved ginger, floating island, cocoanut fudge, lollipops, peppermints, apple dumplings, and many, many more delicious but terrible sweet things, the names of which I do not now remember.

"Clarinda ate them all.

"'And what,' said the Fairy, in his most agreeable tone, next day, 'is to be your last wish, my dear?'

"Clarinda lay in bed staring at him with heavy eyes.

"'Fairy,' she whispered weakly, 'I feel as though I were going to die. I never want to see anything sweet again as long as I live. I don't believe that I shall ever eat anything again at all.'

"The Fairy laughed heartily and heartlessly.

"'What did I tell you?' he said. 'Getting what you want doesn't always work out nicely; in fact, it's very seldom that it does. But you have to make one more wish. What is it to be?'

"'Do I have to?' wailed poor little Clarinda, with tears in her eyes. Oh, Fairy, dear, I wish I didn't have to!—'

"And then the Fairy laughed again, but very gently and kindly this time.

"There!' he said. 'That's your last wish: you've wished it, Clarinda! Didn't I say that you'd learn to be satisfied with things as they were? Goodbye, my dear; I don't believe you'll wish for what is impossible quite so often in the future as you used to! You never know what things will be like, Clarinda, my child, until you've tried them!'

"And so he flew away.

"And that is the story of the little girl who was always wishing."



Now you have come to a funny land:
Make-Believe you have heard it called;
It has no entrance, it has no strand,
It is not free and it is not walled.

Wherever you find the Fairy Gate
All your puzzles and troubles leave;
None knows what may be his fate
In the country of Make-Believe.

To the Rainbow's End you must turn your face;
'Tis Fairy Gold you must win or lose;
And Make-Believe is the only place
Where Anything happens, whenever you choose!

Make-Believing.

CHAPTER VIII

"POT O' GOLD"

N July, Frank was asked to go to a party at the Kents'.

He was greatly excited about it, for not only was it the first invitation to a party that he had ever received in his life, but it was the very first letter that had come to him at all! Although the Grey House was so close, the square white envelope was sealed and stamped and addressed to his very own self, and it came through the mail, which made it a hundred times more thrilling. When he came down to breakfast, there it was lying beside his plate, just as he had so often seen the morning's letters lying beside Auntie Sue's plate.

He read the address slowly aloud:

"Master Francis Merton."

He broke off and looked wonderingly at his aunt. "Why,—that's—why,—I'm Francis Merton!" he cried.

Miss Merton smiled.

"Read it," she suggested.

So Frank opened it, quite trembling with eagerness. It was in Mother-kin's beautiful clear writing, and this was what it said:

"The pleasure of Master Francis Merton's company is requested at the Grey House on Monday afternoon, to hunt for the Pot of Gold."

And down at the bottom of the sheet of paper, Margot had scrawled, with a great waste of ink:

"Dear Frank, do come. Pot of Gold's lots of fun!

"Margot."

"Oh, Auntie," cried Frank joyfully, "isn't that lovely? I—I can go, can't I?" he added, anxiously.

"Yes; I hope it won't be too much for you!" Auntie Sue could not get

used to having her "baby" running about with what she called "rough, noisy children." But it certainly did not seem to have hurt him so far.

"Dear me!" she laughed. "You are growing up, darling! Invitations to parties indeed! What a gay little boy!"

So Monday, which was the next day but one, saw Frank on the lawn of the Grey House, talking to Nancy before the party began.

Did you ever play "Pot o' Gold"? Frank never had, but it seemed an old acquaintance of the Kents'. Nancy told him that they had it at nearly all of their children's parties, and that it was "'mendouthly 'thiting!"—by which she meant "tremendously exciting." She adored long words, though she could never pronounce any of them.

Since Frank knew nothing about parties, any sort of game would have seemed "'citing" to him, but he loved the name, "Pot o' Gold." It sounded fairy-ish, somehow, and altogether delightful.

"Thometimeth," lisped Nancy, "we get caketh and candy and lemonade at the Retht Platheth" (Nancy was trying to say "Rest Places," you understand), "but thometimeth it'th only milk and crackerth. That'th when we're going to have ithe cream afterwardth."

Frank wanted to know what the Rest Places were, and Nancy explained. The "Pot o' Gold" game was played this way: Every child was given a little piece of cardboard with the end of a coloured string attached to it,—red string, blue string, white, yellow, green, silver and gold string. You see, the idea was the old one of following the rainbow till you came to the end of it where the pot of gold was buried. You were supposed to follow your piece of string, winding it up as you went along, till you came to a big, shining pot hidden in the bushes, and covered with gold paper or gilded. In the pot was one big prize, and a lot of little ones, one for every child. The player who reached the treasure first took the prize package, and the others divided the bundles that were left, each in turn as he or she came to the golden pot.

The strings were sometimes awfully hard to follow, Nancy said, for the Grown Ups wound them all about trees and down cellars and tied them into knots about bushes and bannisters and led you all over the place. Once in a while you would come to the Rest Places, where you would find things to eat, or cushions to sit down upon; or sometimes you would come across funny little surprises,—like tiny lighted Jack o' Lanterns shining in dark corners, or mechanical mice that whirled about the floor, when you wound them up, and delayed you unless you kept your wits about you. But if you were wise,

you didn't dawdle on the way, but hurried on after your string, so as to be first at the Pot o' Gold.

"It'th a beautiful pot o' gold thith time!" whispered Nancy. "Want me to tell you what the Firth Prithe ith? I know!"

Frank nodded. Of course he wanted to know what the first prize was! "It'th a tri-thy-cle!" breathed Nancy with shining eyes.

Frank was indeed thrilled. A tricycle! Why, that was one of those lovely, wonderful things that carried you about without your doing anything except sit in it and wiggle your feet on the pedals! He took a long breath. You could pretend you were riding a horse, or a bird, or a sea-lion, or a dragon, or a broomstick, or *anything*, if you had a tricycle.

"D'you know," whispered Nancy, "I hope Jenny getth it! She'th been wanting one for *yearth and yearth!*" Nancy always said hours when she meant minutes, and years when she meant months.

Frank's heart sank, and he almost turned pale. Jenny! What an awful thing it would be if Jenny did get the tricycle! He was not at all piggish: he could bear quite well to give it up to any of the others. But—Jenny! That would be too cruel.

"I hope—" he began, very loudly, and then stopped. After all, nasty as she was, Jenny was Nancy's sister. He finished: "I hope—you'll get it!"

Nancy flushed with pleasure.

"Oh, thank you!" she said gratefully. "But I'd rather Jenny did, or Margot,— or you," she added as a polite afterthought.

"What you talking about?" demanded Jenny, coming up to them with a bounce that set all her red curls bobbing about her face.

"Pot o' Gold," replied her sister.

Jenny made a face at Frank, and he walked off highly indignant, at which fact Jenny laughed shrilly.

"You're as cross as two sticks!" she called after him.

Margot ran out of the house with little dancing steps. She did not bounce like Jenny; she skipped lightly and prettily along, like a kitten after a ball. Frank thought how nice she looked, and what clear, honest brown eyes she had. He wished she had been his sister, and he was glad she wasn't Jenny's. It must be bad enough to be that red-headed girl's cousin, but her sister—!

"You've got the pink string," Margot said to Frank. "I just saw Motherkin write your name on the piece of cardboard fastened to it. And Nancy's got the silver one. I always like the gold and silver ones, don't

you? Makes it seem like opening Christmas presents. But you've never played this before, have you? And I've got the blue one." Margot often was too impatient to wait for answers to her own questions.

Frank fought for a moment or two with a dreadful temptation. Then—he could hardly believe that it was himself speaking,—he said: "What colour is Jenny's string?"

"Jenny? Oh, Jenny's is green. And Billy's is just plain white,—All right, Motherkin; ready!"

Mrs. Kent was calling to them from the verandah, and in a half-minute they had all whirled into the house. Several other children had come in, friends of the Kents'. One of them, Danny Davis, was a boy a little older than Frank and much bigger and stronger. Frank felt rather afraid of him at first; he found it hard to get over his shyness with Well Children. But Danny was a nice boy, and so were two of his friends called Joe and Jerry,—Frank did not hear their last names. There were some little girls too, four of them, and the Grey House was full of laughter and noise.

Then the bits of cardboard were given out, the visiting children having cords of brown, gold, purple, orange, dark blue, grey, bright red, and striped cords of twisted red-and-white and green-and-white.

"I didn't know there were so many colours, Mrs. Kent!" cried Danny Davis, as he looked at the gay threads leading from the centre of the living-room, through doors and windows, out of sight.

"I had difficulty in getting so many different shades of string!" laughed Motherkin. "If I hadn't found that last ball of two-coloured cord—here it is for you, Jerry,—I was afraid I'd have to make the last one of shoe-strings tied together!"

She smiled around at them. "All ready?" she said. "All right. One,—two,—three,—and off with you!"

With a rush the children were away on their hunt for the Pot o' Gold. They nearly tripped each other up, they were in such a hurry. Every one seemed to have his or her heart set on reaching the goal first. All, that is, but Frank. He did not care whether he got the First Prize or not; he was only determined that Jenny should not get it!

Now since you may wonder why a gentle, honourable little boy like Frank should feel so bitter toward any little girl, and plan such a horrid trick upon her, I will tell you that it was all on account of Margot. Frank could never forgive her for laughing at Margot that day in school when she forgot that "silence is golden." He could not really have said just why he was so

exceedingly violent in his feeling of anger against Jenny. He didn't know Margot any better than the other Kent children, but somehow he felt as though he did. She seemed like somebody belonging to him, somebody as close as his own family would have seemed, if he had ever had any one but Auntie Sue. He thought that if he had ever been lucky enough to have had a sister, he would have felt just that way about her, and would have hated any one who was unkind to her just as he now hated Jenny.

By the way, it surprised him and rather horrified him to find that he did hate her. Of course it was wicked to hate any one, and Frank had never thought of himself as being particularly wicked. But hate her he did, and the more he thought about it the worse it got,—both the hating part and the distress over being so wicked. Altogether, it was a very hard time; but worse, far worse, was to follow.

All these thoughts were in his brain so fixedly that just at first he could not give his full attention to "Pot o' Gold." Never before having disliked any one very fiercely, he gave a lot of time and thought to it. Margot in her sweet-tempered way had long ago forgotten that there ever had been any meanness on Jenny's part, but at that time Frank was just beginning to plan dark schemes for revenge. He didn't exactly know what to do to Jenny. Being a girl, he supposed she could not be knocked down and jumped on though that was what he would have liked to do. Besides, he was not any too sure that he would be able to, anyway; Jenny was not taller than he, but she was as hard as nails and as tough as leather.

I do not want you to think of Frank as an underhanded, horrid little boy. But he felt,—as many an older and wiser person has felt if we may believe the history books,—that *this* was a special case and quite different from any other case; that nothing could be too bad for Jenny, and that it would be quite excusable to treat her as he wouldn't dream of treating any other little girl under any possible circumstances.

"Pot o' Gold" was a nice game, and he soon grew interested in it in spite of his puzzles and troubles. It would have been too wonderful for words if he had not been thinking of Jenny and the tricycle. As it was, although he often scowled when he should have laughed, and occasionally almost wished that he had not come to the party at all, he really enjoyed himself most of the time.

Motherkin must have spent most of the day preparing so many pretty surprises. Or—did the Fairies help her perhaps? She seemed to know so much about them that sometimes it seemed to Frank, and to the other chil-

dren as well, as though she must know some of them intimately. It seemed impossible that any Grown Up who was not in league with the Little People could think up for herself all the Fairy ideas that she had.

After the pink twine had led him upstairs, he was met by a big spider's web six feet across at least, with a spider in the middle. The web was only a big sheet with spider-web markings drawn on it with charcoal, and the spider was a sofa cushion with eyes made from the shiny black heads of hat-pins. Across the spider's back was a strip of white paper saying:

"You can't go through my web. Get past the best way you can!"

The sheet was pulled tight across the top of the stairway, and fastened so firmly that it seemed a hopeless notion to think of undoing it. But the different-coloured string all disappeared over the top of it, and one appeared to be expected to get on the other side somehow. Frank thought he might be able to crawl under the lower edge of the sheet, and was just starting in to try when he realised that if he did that, and carried his steadily growing ball of pink twine with him, he would be in a fine fix, with six feet of string on the wrong side of the sheet! No, he must throw the ball over first, then crawl through, find it wherever it had fallen, and follow it as before. It went over, and Frank, after a great deal of puffing and panting and trying and stopping to rest, squeezed himself through at last.

There was his pink ball (for already it was a sort of ball, though not a very big one), waiting for him, but it had fallen in such a way that it was mixed up with two or three criss-cross lengths of blue and red and yellow cords, and it took quite a little time to get it untangled. When it was all straight, he started following it once more, winding it up as he went. But almost at once he found that it led him to a door on which was printed:

"Leave your ball, and come inside to the Mad Tea Party."

He opened the door and went in. The curtains were drawn at the windows, so the room was quite dark except for the dearest little table you ever saw. It was lighted by tiny Christmas-tree-candles, about a dozen of them, and set with a doll's tea-set and a little platter of bread and butter, each slice about three inches square. There was a pot of jam too, with a label: "Jam yesterday and jam to-morrow, served to-day as a special treat!" Then he remembered, and saw at once that this was supposed to be the Mad Tea Party out of "Alice in Wonderland." There was a doll with her hair brushed back smoothly and a pinafore or apron like Alice's; and there was a funny scarecrow of a doll with a big white paper hat which it was easy to see was the Hatter; and there was a toy rabbit to take the March Hare's part,

and a Teddy Bear with a collar on which was written: "The Dormouse was asleep and couldn't come, so I'm taking his place."

The "tea" in the doll's tea-pot was only milk and water and sugar, as Frank found when he poured some out in one of the tiny blue china cups, but there was a little dish of candy to help out the feast.

Danny and Jenny arrived just as Frank was leaving, and he met two or three of the other children outside when he went to get his ball. The pink string led him this time to a wall of books, big heavy ones, too; dictionaries and encyclopedias and bound magazines and big volumes of all sorts. A placard said that this obstacle must be climbed over without disturbing a single book, and this was very hard and took some time.

On the other side of the book wall was the "Toy Shop" which was a long table like a counter, with a big doll in a cap sitting behind it. On the counter were spread out lots of little playthings one or more for each child. There were small dolls, tops, skipping-ropes, animals on wheels, and so on, and every one could pick out what he or she liked best.

The strings led all over the house from attic to cellar, up front stairs, down back stairs. There was one strip of hall where one was told by another sign to go backward all the way. There were tiny mirrors for every one to look in as they backed along, so, if one were careful, nobody need stumble. If one tripped and fell, one must tie a knot in one's string and untie it again, as punishment for being careless and awkward.

After a while the cords led out-of-doors, and took them all over the grounds, among the apple trees and birches and locusts, and through the shrubbery; around corners, along the wall,—everywhere! The children ran into each other, tripped each other up, got their cords tangled, and had a wild romp generally. At one point a big basket of fruit was hanging from a tree for them to eat; at another there was a huge jug of cool water and cups. They met a row of goblinish-looking toys with big heads that wobbled at you when you shook the branch to which they were tied; and, farther on, a giant made of a clothes-horse and some steamer-rugs, with a pillow for a face.

There was a dear little pond with metal ducks and fish floating about and a fishing rod with a magnet attached, so if you liked you could catch a fish and take it with you!

I simply couldn't begin to tell you what fun it was. You must try it yourself some day, and then you'll see. But Frank was, as I have said before, too full of his naughty plans to enjoy it as much as he should have. He

was waiting for a good chance; for having made up his mind what he was going to do, he did not want to have any mistake. And I am sorry to say the chance came.

In the shadow of the cellar doors,—the same doors which Jenny had closed when he was in the cellar,—he had to kneel down and disentangle his cord from a very tough shoot of ivy; and there, close to him, he saw a little line of green! He remembered his talk with Margot: "What colour is Jenny's string?" "Jenny? Oh, Jenny's is green." That was what Margot had said.

Frank took a long breath, and looked around him quickly. Jenny should *not* have a chance at the tricycle! He picked up a small flat stone with a sharp edge, and sawed at the string savagely. It parted, and he threw the stone away and ran on panting, with his hands shaking so much that he could hardly wind up his own pink twine.

In a minute or two he quieted down, but he felt horribly ashamed. He had never done anything dishonest or "sneaky" before, and he had never, never dreamed that he would even think of such a thing.

He did not hurry much, for he did not want to be even among the first at the Pot o' Gold. But just see how things come out! For one reason and another, every boy and girl was delayed except Frank. And can you imagine how he felt when finally, moving very slowly, he came into the little clearing between the lilac bushes and the wall, and found something glittering brightly in the afternoon light?

It was the Pot o' Gold without a shadow of doubt. There were the many-coloured strings running out from it in all directions like rays. Some of the cords quivered as the treasure-seekers in the shrubbery came nearer and nearer, but not one child was in sight. Frank had won the First Prize!

He stared at the shining pot as if he could hardly believe his eyes, and he felt so miserable that he wanted to cry. There was a sign on a stick that stood in the middle of it. This is what was on it:

"When the Fairy Food you've swallowed, When the Rainbow you have followed, If you've done what you've been told, You will find the Pot o' Gold. Every one who comes will find Fairy favours of some kind, But the child who hurries here Will find the Big Prize very near.

Take it you, who first may come:

Jump on quick and ride it home!"

Frank looked about him, and only half hidden by a lilac bush close at hand he saw something that gleamed red between the green leaves. It was the tricycle,—and alas, alas! by some bad luck he had won it! He realised now that he ought to have thought of that possibility and cut his own string too; perhaps it was not too late. He turned quickly, and began unwinding his ball of string, meaning to start back as fast as he could the way he had come. But—it was too late after all!

A loud shout rang out from the bushes behind him, and the next moment his horrified eyes saw Jenny bouncing into the clearing, winding her green cord rapidly as she came.

"Pig!" she cried. "You got here first! I thought I'd beaten everybody,—but I don't care very much. And your having it is almost like keeping it in the family, you live so near. I passed Margot ages ago; there was something the matter with her string; it broke in two right in a horrid dark place. She was just about crying when I left her,—baby!" She laughed shrilly. "Well, you've won the First Prize! I'll just dig into the Pot and see what there is next!"

Frank stood there too bewildered to speak. What did it all mean, anyway? Margot's string had broken! But that couldn't be, for Margot herself had said— Then suddenly he saw what had happened. Margot's cord was blue and Jenny's green and in the dim light among the ivy at the cellar door, he had thought that the blue was green!

It was his fault, and he had been punished by winning the prize.

... Other voices sounded gaily; they were telling him how lucky he was, and how glad they were that he had won.

"Why don't you get your Prize?" demanded Jenny.

Frank swallowed a sob. The act which he had been able to do when it was for some one else seemed too dreadful when he was the one to benefit by it.

"I don't want it!" he said, so wretched in heart that he sounded very rude and cross. "It's a tricycle, and—and—" poor Frank gulped again—"I hate tricycles. I'm going home!"

The days and hours flit o'er us,
And only tire and bore us,
There doesn't seem to be a thing that's either new or strange;
But the rolling waves before us,
And the Ocean Spirit's chorus,
Each time we look or listen seem to undergo a change.

Oh, it's-

"Mortal folk, come near!
Hush and listen: can't you hear?
All the little waves are laughing,
And the mocking winds are chaffing;
Don't you wish you were as we,
Wild and wayward, gay and free,
Sportive sprites of Fäerie?
Come,—the cold salt spray be quaffing:
Come and dance upon the sea!"

The sunny day is going,
The chilly breeze is blowing,
But I won't get one wee bit blue,—I'll only sit and hark;
Just hear the music growing,
Through all the twilight flowing,
The singing of the Deep Sea Elves, borne softly in the dark.
Oh, it's—

"Mortal folk, be brave!

Do not fear the madcap wave;

Just you find where it is hiding,

Then its restive crest bestriding

Spur it onward, racing free,

To the Land of Fäerie!

To the Elfin World come riding;

For it's just beyond the sea!"

Sea Changes.

CHAPTER IX

SEA DREAMS

HE Doctor-Man said that sea-air would be good for Frank that summer.

"Oh, do you think so?" Auntie Sue exclaimed in a troubled

"Oh, do you think so?" Auntie Sue exclaimed in a troubled way. "I—we never go to the sea!"

"Why?" he asked.

Auntie Sue hesitated. Then she said frowning: "I hate it!"

"Then let the little chap go with Mr. and Mrs. Kent! They are taking their youngsters in a week or so, and they'd take good care of Frank."

"And of course, Nurse would go too,-" said Auntie Sue doubtfully.

"Good gracious!" laughed the Doctor-Man. "Has that great boy a nurse still? Come, come, Miss Merton! Frank is not a baby any longer. Send Nurse, by all means, if it will make you easier and happier for the present, but remember that you cannot keep him at the same age always! You had to put him into trousers; well, you've got to let him grow up still more as time goes on. Anyway, take my advice, and send the boy to the seaside with the Kents."

And so it came about that Frank went off soon afterwards on his first journey, with his new friends. By this time, you may be sure, they seemed quite old friends! Nurse went too, in spite of the Doctor's joking for Auntie Sue could not quite bring herself to let him go away alone with any strange people, however good and kind and careful they might be.

They got to the sea-shore hotel late in the day, and it was almost sunset when Frank got his first glimpse of the ocean. At least, he thought it was his first glimpse.

He had often tried to imagine what it would look like, but he had never dreamed that it would be so wonderful as this. It seemed to be bigger than anything, even the sky; and when he looked out over the lovely shimmering waves, where rose and purple and gold and silver and green and deep blue, and a thousand other exquisite colours, changed and faded and brightened under the wind, a big lump came into his throat.

He heard Jenny and Billy shouting with joy as they raced down to the beach at once. Nancy said: "Oh, it'th beautiful!" But Margot shivered and turned her face away, and there were startled tears in her eyes. "It frightens me!" she whispered to Motherkin. "I don't know why, but it does."

Motherkin put her arm about her, and turned to Frank.

"And does it frighten you too?" she said.

"I—I think it does," he said, still staring in its direction. "Lots of the things that frighten Margot frighten me too."

"Yes, you are a good deal alike in many ways,—I've noticed that," said Mrs. Kent. "But you are frightened in a different way, aren't you?"

"I don't know," said Frank, realising how hopeless it was to describe the way he felt, since he could not understand it himself. "Anyway,"—he added,—"I—I didn't know it would be so like—Heaven!—Come on, Margot! Let's go down to the beach, and get acquainted with the sea; then maybe it won't make us feel queer any more!"

Motherkin smiled after them, as the three children ran off to join the others,—for Nancy went too.

Frank was right. A few days close to the ocean took away a great deal of their awe and fear. They all grew to love it,—even Margot. As for Billy-Boy, he was never entirely happy unless paddling in the foamy little waves that broke high up the beach. His father and mother used to say with despairing laughter that they hardly dared to touch him, he was such a storehouse of sand!

They all went bathing every day, and, to Frank at least, the fun of ducking in the cold, salt-smelling green water, did away with the last of his "queer feelings." One should not be afraid of anything so delightful, anything that gave one so much pleasure, and did one so much good. For every dip he took in the surf made him feel more strong, and well, and gay.

One day, Billy came running to the others, holding something carefully in his chubby arms.

"Oh, look!" he cried, in distressed tones. "He's hurted himself. I just founded him!"

It was the morning after a heavy storm, and Billy-Boy's discovery was a sea-gull, with an injured wing. The children had only seen gulls in the distance before, and had not known how pretty they were, with their soft plumage of white and grey shading to a slate-colour that was almost blue-black. It seemed to know it was among friends and would be treated kindly, and it did not flutter nor struggle. Mr. Kent said the wing was not broken, and that the bird would soon be able to fly again. Meanwhile, the children

took turns taking care of it, keeping it warm, and bringing it things to eat.

"I suppose it likes sea-weed," said Margot; but sea-weed proved rather a failure. Fish it would always eat, either raw or cooked, but it soon developed a very tame-bird taste for bread-crumbs and oat-meal.

"Birds eat bugs and flies," suggested Jenny.

"Ugh! I wouldn't catch bugs and flies even for our sea-gull!" cried Margot indignantly.

"'Sides," said Billy-Boy, "I don't think it'd be very nice, after the

Beetles-"

"Don't!" said Nancy, quickly and softly. And Billy said no more.

The Sea Gull got to know them,—or acted as though it knew them, at least. It would cock its head in quite a friendly manner, and always kept still while they stroked or talked to it. Even after its wing was strong again, it did not try to fly away, but stayed on quietly with them, taking short flights through the open window, but soon returned to perch on the window-sill, preen its feathers, and ask, with a queer low cry it had, for good things to eat.

Frank took a great interest in the bird, and fancied that it liked him better than the other children,—or anyway took more notice of him. And one

night he knew that it had not been altogether fancy.

For he was awakened from a sound sleep by hearing a voice say:

"What shall we do to-night?"

He sat up in bed, and saw the Sea Gull settling its plumage on the footrail of the bed.

"Why, Sea Gull!" he exclaimed, "what in the world are you doing here?"

"None of your business!" replied the bird rudely. It seemed to be a dreadfully order-you-about sort of creature. "I have no patience with people who are always asking questions!"

"I only said—" began Frank more meekly.

The Gull cut him short.

"Then for goodness' sake, don't!" it said, very impolitely indeed.

Frank stared. "Don't what?" he asked.

"Say anything!" snapped the bird, polishing a feather by rubbing its beak upon it just as you would rub chamois skin upon a piece of silver.

Frank was obediently silent. He was sure that the bird would soon get tired of that! If it hadn't meant to talk, it wouldn't have spoken to him in the first place.

Sure enough, when the feather was shiny enough to suit it, it twisted its

head around and fixed Frank with a look from its beady little black eyes.

"Why don't you talk?" it said sharply.

"You said not to."

"That—" said the Sea Gull in a decided way,—"was then. This is now. Talk."

Frank was only too glad to talk.

"Oh, Sea Gull,—please!" he said, leaning forward excitedly. "I want to go to sea to-night! You asked me what I wanted to do, and I'm sure you can manage it if you try!"

The Sea Gull considered this.

"M-m-m-m." it mumbled, uncertainly. "I don't know. I don't really know if it can be done. You see," it added, as though explaining, "you're not a Fairy, though I am,—or just as good as one. And Human Beings are such—such *lumpish* things to carry about with one! You might tumble into the water, you know, and get drowned;—Human Beings do, sometimes, and it's ridiculous of them, I think. And then the Deep Sea People would know that I'd broken rules and taken a Mortal into forbidden territory."

"Territory," interrupted Frank importantly, "has something to do with earth. Auntie Sue told me so. It doesn't mean the sea,—Oh!"

For the Sea Gull had swiftly hopped down onto the bed, and nipped Frank's toes sharply through the bed-clothes.

"Maybe that'll teach you to try to correct older and wiser people than yourself!" it said fiercely.

"Persons!" persisted Frank, obstinately. "Ouch!—You hurt me, Sea Gull!"

"I meant to!" said the bird, and gave another tweak. "Trying to teach your betters the English language!"

Frank wanted to tell it that "your betters" was usually said by uneducated persons, but he didn't dare. Instead, he reached down and felt the two toes which the Gull had pinched.

"Why, I can hardly wiggle them!" he said plaintively. "You're awfully rough, Sea Gull! And," he went on, "I suppose Nurse will say to-morrow, 'Oh, Master Frankie! You must have kicked against the bed-foot in your sleep!" Because, of course, nobody would believe in you, Sea Gull!"

The Sea Gull gave a sound which was probably meant for laughter. It wasn't in the least sympathetic.

"Well," it said briskly, "let's see what's best to be done. It is close on



Billy-Boy's discovery was a sea-gull, with an injured wing



midnight, and we have lost time quarrelling. You want to go to sea, you say. Have you ever been to sea?"

"No," said Frank, and as he said it he thought of course that he was telling the truth. But when he had spoken he had an odd feeling that it was not so after all, that he had been on the sea, though he could not imagine when it could have been.

"What's the matter?" demanded the Sea Gull, for its sharp eyes had seen Frank's puzzled look.

"I don't know," the boy returned truthfully. "It's very funny, Sea Gull. Just for a moment it seemed to me that I could remember something from 'way back, about the sea, but I don't see how—'

"M-m-m-m." murmured the Sea Gull again, thoughtfully this time. "If you have ever been on the sea, it will be easy enough; for all you have to do is to dream back and live it over again."

"But if I don't remember?—" objected Frank.

"That's got nothing to do with it. Your mind will remember. If you've ever done a thing, you can dream back and do it again. We'll try it, anyway. First we'll go for a fly. Shut your eyes, and climb on my back."

"Your back?" said Frank. "Why, you are too little to-"

"Do as I tell you!" screamed the Sea Gull, in a fury.

"Oh, please don't! You'll wake everybody up!" gasped Frank. After all, if the Beetles could change the sizes of things,— He shut his eyes tight, and reached out in the direction of the bird.

"Is that you?" he whispered, as his outstretched hands found warm soft feathers in the darkness.

"Hurry up!" said the Sea Gull.

Before he knew it, Frank had climbed upon a great back, and instantly felt a rush of air all about him, and the tremble of beating wings.

It was a strange, dizzy, wonderful feeling. He was being carried through the air very fast. First it was warm in-doors air,—then there came a quick swoop and lift, and a fresh, cool wind was against his face. Frank knew that they had gone through the open window.

"All right," came the voice of the Sea Gull beneath him. "Open your eyes now!"

Frank obeyed. At first, as he looked up, he just saw the stars and the dark sky as he often had before. But the Sea Gull spoke again.

"Look down!" it said.

Frank stretched himself out along the warm, throbbing feathered back,

and peered downward between the bird's neck and out-spread wings. As he looked, he gave a gasp of excitement.

Far, far below, something moved and gleamed faintly in the dim starlight, now darker, now lighter, sometimes as white as silver; a low, murmuring, complaining noise came to him, and he smelled the salt ocean perfume as he had never smelt it before.

"Sea Gull!" he whispered, breathlessly. "We're flying over the sea!"

Down toward the tossing, black, white-fringed waves plunged the Sea Gull. And an awful, cold terror came into Frank's heart. And with this terror came too a curious sense that he had felt just like this before! When could it have been? He tried to remember, but his head was dizzy, and the smell of the salt water growing closer and closer made him gasp and choke for breath.

Then the great waves reached up for him, and the Sea Gull swooped sharply into the very heart of them at last. There was a surge of keen cold all about him, and his mind stopped working sensibly, and he forgot where he was and who he was. He only knew that there was danger, and confusion, and deep, deep fear, and that he was very helpless.

It seemed to him that he struggled with heavy walls and mountains of icy water, as one struggles with a nightmare; and at last even that feeling went away from him. He was drifting, drifting, among strong-smelling clumps of sea-weed, and the cold waves were closing over him, parting, and then closing again. He had forgotten the Sea Gull.

And all the time there was a big noise in his ears, low and yet loud at the same time,—something like an organ in church. Sometimes the sound rose, and sometimes fell . . . rising . . . falling . . . And he was never still, but forever tossed about on something more restless than any bird in flight.

Then he was floating through endless blackness and blankness. He thought that voices spoke to him at times, but he could only hear scraps of what they said: "It is he . . . I know it! . . . Have we not done well, sisters? . . . Surely it was the best way! . . . May good fortune attend him and the woman in whose hands we laid him?" . . .

These things they said, and much more besides, but soon the voices slipped into a dull, murmuring roar such as you hear when you hold a shell against your ear; and afterwards all sounds ceased, and he sank through peaceful water, down—down—quite quietly and naturally,—until . . .

. . . He opened his eyes and looked about the room.

For of course he was lying in bed, quite as usual. Except for his aching

bones and tired head, he might have fancied that it had all been a dream.

A dream! That brought back the memory of what the Sea Gull had said: "You can dream back and live it over again." Was that what had happened? Had he really once struggled for breath in the cold salt water like that? And had he just dreamed it over again? And whose were the mysterious voices that had spoken all about him? The Sea Gull had mentioned the Deep Sea People; perhaps it had been they,—the Fairies of the Ocean?...

But there are some questions to which neither young nor old brains can ever find a true answer. Frank decided not to think of his dream,—if it had been a dream,—any more. It had been wonderful and exciting, but rather terrible.

The daylight was streaming into the room, but there was no sunshine this morning. Nurse had just come in.

"It's a stormy day," said she, closing the window. "There'll be no bathing on the beach to-day, I'm thinking.— Come, dearie, and get up; your bath's ready." Suddenly, as he flung the bed-clothes off and started to get up, she exclaimed:

"Why, Master Frankie! Your foot's all bruised! You must have kicked against the bed-foot in your sleep!"

Frank could not help laughing aloud, as he jumped out of bed.

"I knew you'd say that, Nurse!" he cried.

But of course Nurse did not know what he was talking about!

Later the other children told him regretfully that the Sea Gull had flown away during the night. None of them ever saw it again.

The Little Boy in the Greenhouse:

See them grow, see them blow, Poppies and pinks in a gorgeous row; Hollyhocks tall and violets small, And dignified lilies the fairest of all!

Sing and sigh, sing and sigh,
Gazing through glass at the bright blue sky;
Do they talk to the Elves on the greenhouse shelves,
Or what do they do to amuse themselves?

They look so proud, so awfully proud, Here in a stiff and splendid crowd! I think they are nobles, grand and good, But—I'd rather grow in the outside wood!

The Hot-House Flowers:

We have rules, as well as schools,—
Heed you what I tell:
There are many lessons you
Should know how to learn and do
Just as well as read or spell,
If you are not fools!
You I call conceited all,
Big folk though you be;
For a sensible idea
Look to some wise flower near:
You will hear some things made clear,—
Take it straight from me!

How to grow and bloom we know,
Perfume all a-stream;
How to gaily deck ourselves,
For our friends among the Elves,
How to gleam, and how to dream,
How to glow and blow.
Many rules are not in schools,—
We'd teach you, if you'd heed;
But, such small respect is ours,
You just say, "They're only flowers!"
Now, my dear, just stop and hear:
Manners are what you need!

CHAPTER X

THE LILY AND THE GLASS HOUSE

HEY all went home soon after this, and Auntie Sue was so glad to see Frank again that she cried. He never told her about the queer "dream" he had had; she hated the sea, and somehow he knew that it would trouble her; he did not know how he knew it, but he did.

He and the Kents fell into their old every-day ways, visiting each other, playing games, wandering about the fields together, romping with Funny and Inky and Cotton, and listening to Motherkin's stories, when it was too hot or too rainy to go out.

One day she told one that made Frank very uncomfortable and unhappy. He had tried to forget the horrid way he had acted toward Jenny in the "Pot o' Gold" game, but he never could forget it, quite, and this tale of Mrs. Kent's hurt both his feelings and his conscience. I'm sure every one who reads this knows well enough what that feeling is!

"I'll tell you," said Motherkin, "why we shouldn't tell what isn't true, nor take what isn't ours, nor do things that our mothers and aunts and teachers and nurses tell us not to. Of course we ought to obey them, anyway, because they are sure to know best, but the little story I'm going to tell you gives still another reason for not doing deceitful things. Here's something which I don't believe ever occurred to you: we all know that we can't do wrong in life without hurting some one else; but sometimes it is not only people who are hurt; there are all the Fairy folk, and the animals, and the flowers, and the bugs and books and trees, and all the things that happen to get mixed up with our wrong-doing. We upset all their plans; and though that sounds hard to understand I know, the experience that Jacky had with the Glass House and the Lily will explain to you a little.

"Jacky was a little boy about as big as our Billy, and—"

Here Billy wanted to know if he looked like him. Motherkin shook her head, doubtfully as though considering. "I think we'll have him quite different," she said. "That makes it more interesting, doesn't it?"

"Motherkin!" broke in Margot reproachfully. "You are talking just as if he were a Make-Believe little boy, and you know your little story-boys are always real!"

"To be sure!" said Motherkin, hastily. "He was quite real, and his hair—his hair was brown, I think,—"

"Like Frank'th?" asked Nancy.

"Very like Frank's. And very like Margot's, too. But he was chubby and round;—I only wish Frank were half so fat!" And Motherkin smiled kindly at their little neighbour, of whom she had grown very fond.

"Well, go on with the story, please, Motherkin," said Jenny, who was

beginning to get impatient.

So Motherkin went on, with all of them cuddled up about her as close as they could possibly get. Children always did that with Motherkin; she seemed made just to snuggle against,—and she liked it, too.

"Jacky lived in a little house,—quite a little house, though not so small as the hut belonging to Bennie and his grandmother. You remember Bennie and the Kobold, don't you Well, Jacky had no brothers nor sisters, but lived with his father alone. He hadn't any mother either, and sometimes he heard people say that it was wonderful how any man could bring up a little boy so nicely!

"Jacky's Papa was not like most Papas, because he was very lame, and couldn't go out, nor walk, nor do regular work, but sat all day and late into the night in a big chair by the window, or out in the little scrap of a garden. And sometimes he would read big books, and sometimes he would paint pictures, using all sorts of the prettiest colours (I will tell you more about that later), and sometimes he would play soft tunes on a violin; and sometimes he would just talk to Jacky. And he would tell him about his mother, who had—had gone away."

"Like my mother?" said Frank. "And Margot's?"

"Yes, dear." Motherkin's voice sounded a little queer, as it always did when she spoke of something that was sad but sweet and beautiful at the same time,—like "going away," as the grown-ups called it. "There was a picture of her in the cottage where they lived, and she was a beautiful lady with big brown eyes, and such a sweet, gentle look. Her name was Margaret—"

"Why, how funny!" cried Margot, quite excited and pleased at that. "Did the little boy's Papa tell him that?"

"Goosy!" said Jenny sharply. "Of course he did, or how could Motherkin know it? Go on, Motherkin; she's just a silly!"

"But ith the little boy'th mother in the thtory?" asked lisping Nancy anxiously.

Motherkin gave a sort of start.

"Why, no, she isn't!" she admitted, half-laughing. "I believe I was thinking of something else, and that's a dreadful thing to do when you're telling a story, isn't it? I said Margaret, my dears, because it was my sister's name,—Margot's mother, you know."

Margot nodded; she had known all along that it was that. But Mother-kin was telling the story:

"The little boy's Papa and the little boy himself were both very fond of flowers, but the garden was not nearly so beautiful as it should have been, for the father was not strong enough to look out for it properly, and Jacky was not big enough; and they were not rich enough to have a really-truly gardener. There was a big man named Logan who used to come and rake and weed occasionally, but very often the lame man couldn't afford to pay him even the little bit of money he asked by the day. And Mary, who cooked for them, and washed, and ironed, and cleaned, and dusted, and scrubbed, and sewed, had no time to bother about gardens,—and not much time to bother about little boys. And she had a very bad temper anyway.

"'Oh, if only I had some real flowers to paint!' the lame Papa groaned often, when he was making the little pictures,—for that, after all, was what he did best and what he loved best to do, and what seemed to be the thing that other people liked best too.

"Then Jacky would say: 'Why, Papa, aren't these real flowers?"

"And the lame man would look at the rows of geraniums that needed to have the dead leaves snipped off, and the daisies and heliotropes that looked dusty and tired, and the pansies, yellow and purple, that were crowded half to death by weeds; and he would smile and sigh, and say:

"'Yes, Jacky! These are real flowers, and good flowers, too! We will make a beautiful picture of them, just to show that they are real!'

"So then he would paint away very fast indeed, as if his life depended on it,—and maybe it did. And when the picture was done, Jacky would look at it, and cry: 'Why, Papa, it's beautiful!'

"'But it's a picture of these flowers, isn't it?— These very flowers?"
Papa would say.

"'Yes,' Jacky would reply, 'but they look nice in the picture, somehow!"
"And how Papa would laugh!

"Maybe that picture would be sent off somewhere that day, and sometimes, soon afterward, a letter would come to Papa, and he would cry gaily:

"'Little son, we're rich for a whole week! We'll have cake for tea, and

I'll write for new paints to-night, and Logan shall come to-morrow and look after the garden a bit!'

"But though his lame Papa could make wonderful pictures even out of the starved and neglected little plants in the garden, Jacky knew that it was not easy. He did so long, did the little boy, to be able to bring him some 'real flowers' to paint! For he knew quite well what he meant: he meant those big, gorgeous, bright-coloured blossoms that you saw in rich people's windows, or caught glimpses of when you peeked in at their gates.

"Well, it is very odd, as you know, the way things happen every day, just fitting in like the pieces in a picture puzzle. This was just exactly like a Fairy tale. Jacky was thinking even harder than usual about his father and the flowers, when there came to him what seemed the most wonderful chance in the world to please Papa.

"The little boy was roaming about by himself; you see he had more liberty than most little boys who have sisters and brothers, for there was no one to go about with him. Sometimes it made him a little nervous, but sometimes he liked it. To-day he was walking along through some lovely trees that grew for quite a long distance back of the cottage where he lived, when just in front of him he saw, flashing and glittering in the spring sunshine, a house all of glass!

"He had never seen anything like it before, and it did seem just like a Fairy tale, for he had never known that houses could be built of glass. He did not even know that there were such things as greenhouses, where flowers can grow in all sorts of weather, just as well as they could out of doors in the warmest seasons,—and better, for that matter! This glass house was not so very big really, but it looked like a magic palace to Jacky. You see he was rather small himself, and when the sun is shining your eyes are dazzled anyway, and either things seem larger and more splendid than they really are, or else you don't see them at all!

"It was in spring and the boughs were not yet quite green, though the air was sweet and very warm, and Jacky already wore white clothes and no heavy stockings or coat. And yet (though as I say the trees did not have all their leaves and there were no flowers at all except the little new ones half hidden away under dead leaves in the woods), there was a whole garden blooming inside the Glass House!

"There were white flowers, and pink, and red, and lavender, and yellow, and all with such a lot of wonderful bright green mixed in with the brilliantly coloured blossoms! It made Jacky gasp. He felt sure that the Fair-

ies had led him to this marvellous and magnificent place, and he wished with all his heart that his papa could be here too, and see, as he was seeing, these lovely, lovely flowers that grew inside the glittering Glass House.

"He did not seem to be able to help creeping closer and closer, and suddenly—he found himself at the very door of the mysterious palace,—and the door was open! Nobody was anywhere to be seen, and with his heart beating very fast he stole in.

"The air inside the Glass House was unlike anything that Jacky had ever imagined. It was very sweet, but that he could understand in one way, on account of the quantities and quantities of flowers all about, though even that seemed just a little marvellous, for the flowers that Jacky and his father had in their garden had not a great deal of scent on their best days. The perfume here was,—oh, I can't begin to tell you how lovely it was, nor how delicious it seemed to Jacky. And then it was so warm,—a different sort of warmth from that of the spring day outside,—a velvety, soft kind of warmth, that felt almost as though it had been raining and the sun had been shining, both at the same time!

"And the flowers! Such tall, great, lovely, smiling flowers,—at least, Jacky felt sure that they were smiling or trying to, standing in rows on rows, on low shelves and benches, one above the other, in reddish flower-pots, with the glass walls of the house all above and around them, and the blue, blue sky showing through,—the sky and those bare branches with just a little green on them.

"And Jacky loved those flowers so much that he did not know what to do. You see, he was rather like his father, which was one reason why he understood so very well his longing for beautiful growing things. And he nearly cried as he realised that Papa would never be strong enough to limp all that way to see the Glass House and make pictures of the lovely things that were in it.

"And then he thought of something!

"And even as he thought of it, he knew that it was a very wrong idea,—really, the more one thought of it, quite a wicked idea. For what he thought of was: taking away one of the exquisite, tall, sweet-scented flowers to Papa! He hoped of course that no one would see him do it, for in his heart he knew it was stealing; taking something that didn't belong to you was always stealing. He tried hard to pretend that he did not remember that. But he did, and the more he knew that it was wrong the more wrong it became. For lots of us do things that other people think wrong, and it may be so or not; but

when we know it ourselves, it always is wrong: we all may be quite sure of that! And no amount of pretending will ever make it seem right if we are silly enough to try to lie to our little consciences!

"And—after one excited glance around to be quite certain that no one was looking, he reached up, seized the nearest lily, and carried it, flower-pot and all, out of the Glass House! When he was out of doors he ran as fast as he possibly could, in spite of the weight in his arms, for he felt as though there must be policemen, and soldiers, and Witches, and every other dreadful creature racing after him. But he did not weaken nor stop, until, panting for breath, he rushed up to his father where he sat thinking very soberly and sadly on the little verandah.

"'Oh, Papa!' gasped poor Jacky, setting down the potted lily, and sitting down himself to get his breath. 'I've got a real flower for you to paint!'

"Papa's whole face lighted up when he saw the beautiful white lily. It looked more wonderful than ever, here in the middle of such simple everyday things.

"'Why, it's perfect!' said Papa, in a low delighted voice, and without taking his eyes from it, he reached for his paint-box and the palette where he mixed such lovely colours. And he was so pleased that at first he did not ask a single question, and Jacky never said a word, but just sat quietly watching him paint, and getting his breath back a tiny bit at a time.

"But after Papa had painted happily and excitedly for a few minutes, his face began to grow grave and more puzzled, as though he were thinking of one or two things that he had not taken time to think of at first; his brush moved more slowly. And after a little time he did not paint any more at all, but sat holding the brushes and the palette quietly, and looking at Jacky in a very troubled way.

"'And where did you find the lily?' he asked. 'Did some one give it to you?'

"Jacky shook his head for he could not answer. You see, he knew all along that it hadn't been right to take it without asking some one's permission, and he hated to talk to his father about it.

"Papa sat and looked at Jacky a moment, and his eyes were very grave indeed.

" 'Tell me all about it,' he said.

"So Jacky told him, for he always told him everything anyway, sooner or later. And when he was through Papa put down the palette and the

brushes as if he were through with them, and then he took the pretty picture he had begun to make of the lily, and slowly tore it into small pieces.

"'Oh, Papa!' exclaimed Jacky, almost crying. 'Why did you do that?'

"'It would have brought us no luck,' said his lame Papa,—'the picture of something that was stolen!'

"'But you didn't take it, Papa!"

"'No; and that's just what you have to learn, Jacky. When you do wrong, you may be punished or not, but some one else always is! Now you must take the lily back to where you found it, and I will write a note explaining; we don't want the people who own that greenhouse to think we're just ordinary thieves.'

"So he wrote the note, and after folding it, stuck the end of it into the loose earth in the flower-pot, and Jacky carried his prize all the way back. And the pot seemed a hundred times heavier, and the distance a hundred times greater than it had seemed earlier in the afternoon!

"He was so tired by the time he had gotten inside the Glass House, that he sat down near the open door, right on the rough board floor, and two or three big tears rolled down his cheeks. He held the heavy earthen flowerpot in his lap, and the cool green stem of the tall lily felt comforting as it touched his hot face. 'I don't believe I can lift you onto the shelf,' he said to the flower. 'I'll just rest a minute first anyway.'

"He set the pot down on the floor beside him, and gave a big sigh.

"'You're perfectly lovely,' he told the lily, 'but I s'pose it was very wicked to take you away!'

"'Very!' said a voice right out of the yellow centre of the lily. Jacky nearly fell over backward in his astonishment.

"'Why-why'-he gasped, 'did you speak, Lily?"

"'Certainly I did. I made up my mind to give you a talking to, though one doesn't usually waste time talking to human beings. They are all too stupid.'

"'But I didn't know flowers could talk,' said Jacky,—just like Alice in Wonderland,—you remember? And the Lily answered, just the way Alice's Rose did: 'They all can, and most of them do!'

"'I think that's out of a book,' said Jacky, trying to think what book it was.

"'Very likely,' said the Lily. 'We can talk out of any book we like, whenever we like. We are very clever, you see!'

"'All of you?'

"'All of us. Though of course I am much the cleverest. We are all of us very particular whom we talk to, as I have said, but this is really altogether too much, and some one ought to speak to you about it.'

"'Oh, are you going to scold me?' sighed poor Jacky.

"'Yes, indeed, and high time too! Your father didn't do it a bit; I heard him. And he didn't say a word about what is most important; he didn't tell you how horrid and selfish you were not to think of Me!'

"'You!' said Jacky, not understanding at all. 'Does it make any dif-

ference to you?'

"The Lily's white petals quivered. Jacky did not know exactly what was wrong with it till the voice said, very angrily this time: "Any difference! I should rather think it did make a difference! Why, use your eyes! Can't you see for yourself what a splendid place this is,—all shining, and sweet-smelling, and beautiful? What does it look like, do you think?"

"'A sort of-why, I think a sort of palace,' answered Jacky, hesitat-

ingly.

"'Precisely! It is not a *sort* of palace; it is a palace for flowers. And I am the Queen here.'

"'A Queen!"

"'Yes, the Queen Lily. I am very important, as you may imagine. So when you took me away, you upset a great many plans.'

"But how was I to know that you were a Queen? pleaded Jacky.

"'You should have known merely by looking at me,' she returned stiffly, —oh, very stiffly indeed! 'Queens are not supposed to look like other people, I should hope!'

"'N-no,' said Jacky politely but doubtfully. He could not see much difference between the Queen and the other white lilies in the Glass House. 'But if you are the Queen, why don't the flowers say something to show

they're glad to see you back?'

"They are all taking naps, apparently,' said the Queen. 'Poor dears, I suppose they cried themselves to sleep! Go over to that extra straight one, —no, the one at the left; there, that's the one. Just wake her up. She is our Teacher Lily, and is very clever indeed,—almost as clever as I am! She teaches the flowers the rules for good manners,—flowers are very careful about etiquette, you know,—and shows them how to put on the colours the Fairies bring them, and—'

"'Why, do you have to paint yourselves?' cried Jacky, very much surprised.

"'Of course we do. You have to dress yourself, don't you? Of course the Fairies are very nice and obliging, and will do it for any of the very young or very stupid flowers; but it has to be done by somebody. Even I have to put on a gown of fresh white dye every single morning and another every night!'

"'D'you s'pose that's what's the matter with the geraniums and things at home?' asked Jacky. 'They always look so dusty and

dull!'

"'Poor, neglected creatures!' said the Queen Lily. 'I'll speak to the Fairies about them without fail. Now, go and wake the Teacher Lily. She will tell you why it was so *inconsiderate* and *wrong* to take me away this afternoon.'

"Jacky scrambled to his feet and stood rather shyly looking around the greenhouse. Then, facing the rows of white lilies, he said softly:

"'Oh, if you please, Lady Teacher Lily,-

"The Lily gave a quick little start. It was evident that she really had been asleep.

"'Who's speaking?' she exclaimed, in a sharper tone than that of the

Queen.

"'I—I am—' began Jacky timidly, but by that time the other flowers were all awake too, and there was a perfect chorus of 'There he is! That's the monster,—the horrible boy who took our dear Queen away! Shame on you, boy,—shame, shame!'

"'I am ashamed,' said Jacky sadly, 'but I didn't know,--'

"'Ignorance of the rules is no excuse!' snapped the Lily Teacher.

"'You know all the rules there are, don't you?' he asked, looking at her with great respect.

"'I know all the rules there are,' she replied, importantly, 'and a great

many more!'

"'Well,' broke in a big yellow Poppy impatiently, 'I don't care so much about the rules as about our not having the party to-night. It's too annoying,—with the Fairies bringing us new frocks and all!'

"'A party!' exclaimed Jacky.

"'Yes,' said a deep-red Gladiola, crossly. 'The Queen Lily was going to give a Court Ball to-night, and everybody was going to have such a good time! And now, of course, we are in a sort of Court mourning, and can't have any fun at all!'

"But does every one have to be in Court mourning?"

"You see,' said the Teacher Lily, 'the first rule of any well conducted Court is Organisation.'

"'Or-gan-i-sa-tion,' repeated the little boy. 'If you please, I don't know what that means.'

"'Doing everything together, for the sake of every one else,' said a near-by Violet. 'At least,' the little flower added timidly, 'it's something like that. I'm a very humble person, you know, and don't know much about anything!'

"The Violet was always talking about how humble she was, but Jacky

could not help thinking that really she put on a lot of airs.

"An Azalea struck in then, fluttering its pink blossoms: I do think it's horrid to interfere with our plans like this! Why, we were going to have such a beautiful time!—'

"'Were only the flowers of this Glass House invited to the party?' asked Jacky.

"That's the point! We were going to have a lot of strangers,—quite poor flowers some of them; wild ones, you know, from the woods and fields. We have wanted to know them for ever so long, but we have never before had a Queen who was willing to send all sorts of flowers invitations. Some of the wild-roses and buttercups and all those are so nice, I've heard!"

"'I wish some one would ask our flowers to a party!' said Jacky regret-

fully. 'They do seem so poky!'

"'Well, there isn't going to be any party now, anyway,' said a Tulip which seemed in a very bad temper. 'So it doesn't make much difference who's asked and who isn't!'

Margot interrupted. She always liked Motherkin's little songs, made up as she went along, so just now she struck in, in a very wheedling sort of tone: "Didn't the flowers sing something, Motherkin?"

Motherkin laughed. "Ye-es," she said. "I suppose they must have sung something,—if I only could remember it! Well,—perhaps I haven't it quite right,—" she smiled mischievously, and her eyes twinkled,— "but I think it went something like this."

And she half sang, half spoke the song of the flowers:

"Your stolen Lily was the Queen, Dressed in white and gold and green, Such a flower was never seen,— Proud and fair and stately; Little boy, just understand You have spoiled the ball she planned; Now we all of us must stand On our shelves sedately.

"Wildwood things we might have met,
Mayflowers with the raindrops wet,
Daisies in the grasses set
Like the stars above them,
Still are strangers, till some day,
In another blooming May,
At another party gay,
We may meet and love them.

"Little boy, if you would be
Wise and kind and glad and free,
Friend of Nature such as we,
The guest of Fairy nations,
Just recall, that what you do
Touches us as well as you;
Please don't throw them all askew,—
Our dates and invitations!"

Then Motherkin proceeded with the story about Jacky:

"Jacky felt very badly about all the bother he had caused, and could hardly wait for the end of the song to tell them the good news.

"T've brought her back to you!" he cried when they had stopped singing.

"'The Queen Lily?' cried several dozen eager flower-voices.

"'Yes, and here she is!"

"He pointed triumphantly. For a minute the Glass House sounded like a whole treeful of birds, for all the flowers and plants talked at once, and the Queen stood bowing graciously until Jacky thought that her beautiful green leafy stalk must ache with so much bending.

"At last the others stopped talking, and she said very sweetly:

"'Thank you, my dear friends and subjects! And now—we must get ready for the party!"

"Your Majesty will not be too tired?' cried a few anxious flowers.

"The Queen said that she was a little tired of course, but kindly added that that made no difference. They would have the Court Ball just the same. 'If it were only you, dear friends,' she said, 'I might postpone it for a

little while, but we must think of all the strange flowers that we have invited.

It would never do to disappoint them!"

"Then she turned to Jacky. 'Now you see,' she said, 'that the things you do may make a great deal of trouble or a great deal of pleasure for ever so many people and flowers and beings of all sorts that you think will never know anything about it. You thought it was just you and your father and the people who own this place who were concerned in what you did. But you see you upset the plans of every flower in the Glass House and in the woods and thickets and pastures for miles around. You nearly spoiled their happy evening, and, if you had not brought me back, you would have put them to ever so much bother choosing a new Queen. Think of all that, the next time you feel like taking something that does not belong to you! Think of the feelings of the thing you take!"

(At this point in Motherkin's story, Frank felt so uncomfortable and ashamed that he didn't know what to do. He was thinking of the string that he had cut in the hunt for the "Pot o' Gold," and of that hateful red tricycle which didn't belong to him and which he didn't in the least want. He wondered how the tricycle felt about it!)

"Jacky could not bear to have them do nothing but scold him, so he

cried pleadingly: 'But I brought you back, Queen Lily!'

"True,' she said, 'and thanks to that, I am in time to give the party after all. So you see that when you do the right thing you give pleasure, just as when you do the wrong thing you give trouble. Having to carry me all the way back, and making your papa unhappy, and being scolded, were all part of your punishment. And you'll have several nice things happen to you as a reward for having honestly returned what you took. Some of the nice things will happen later on,—so I can't tell you about them, except to say that I'll invite the flowers in your garden to my next party! But the first is that—you will be allowed just a glimpse of the Fairies when they bring us our new ball-dresses! That is, unless something happens suddenly to—'

"'Look, they are coming already!' cried the Poppy eagerly.

"'They are coming! The Fairies are coming!' exclaimed all the flowers together.

"Jacky listened, and he could hear a soft rustling and whispering that sounded all down the sweet-smelling length of the Glass House. The flowers turned their heads toward the open door, as if waiting for something, and all at once it seemed to Jacky that he could see hundreds and hundreds of tiny figures floating in the afternoon sunlight against the green of the trees.

"'Oh, oh!' he cried. 'Are they really Fairies? It's like a dream, Queen Lily,—it's just exactly like a dream!'

"It is a dream,' said the Queen Lily, to his surprise. 'But be very, very

careful, and perhaps you won't wake up just yet.'

"The Fairies seemed suddenly to be inside the Glass House; the air was full of the rustle of their wings. It seemed to the little boy that all the flowers cried softly: 'Now be careful,—very careful, and don't wake up!' . . .

"And with those words, 'Wake up,' ringing in his ears, Jacky opened his

eyes!

"He was sitting on the floor of the Glass House, with the Queen Lily standing straight, and stately, and beautiful, in the flower-pot beside him. There were no Fairies to be seen, and the flowers were not talking now. So it had been a dream after all!

"But Jacky was still puzzled. 'Somebody spoke; I'm sure somebody spoke!' he said aloud to himself.

"'I did,' said a soft voice,—not a flower-voice this time. He looked up, startled, and there stood a very lovely lady in very lovely clothes, smiling down at him. With her was a tall gentleman, also smiling.

"'I said "Little boy, wake up!"' explained the lady.

"'We've read the note you brought,' said the gentleman, and then Jacky remembered all about everything, and hung his head. He got up without saying a word.

"The lady stroked his hair kindly. 'It's all right,' she said. 'Do you want to see what your father wrote us, little boy?'

"Papa's note ran:

"'You must forgive my little son for having borrowed your lily. It was for me that he took it, but I have explained to him that it was wrong, and he is returning it herewith."

"Then a name was signed. The gentleman repeated it: "John Fleming." There used to be a painter of that name."

"'Why did you want the lily for your father, little boy?" asked the soft-voiced lady. 'Is he so fond of flowers?"

"Jacky said that he painted flowers. 'Not put the colours on them, you

know,' he explained. 'Of course I know that they do that themselves, or the Fairies do it for them. But Papa makes pictures of them. And he's lame, and can't get about much, and we've only scrubby flowers in our garden, though Papa makes lovely pictures of them anyway, and I s'pose they're nice flowers, too, if you know them well, and I thought—I thought maybe that beautiful white one—' Jacky's breath gave out, and he stopped and choked back a sob in his throat.

"'Poor child!' said the lady.

"The father must be a fine fellow,' said the gentleman. 'He must be the John Fleming I remember hearing of, too. I heard that he had lost his health, and could not work as he used to. So he didn't want you to keep anything without asking permission, eh?'

"'He said it wouldn't bring us any luck,' said Jacky.

"'Well, suppose you got it with permission—' the gentleman was begin-

ning, but the lady stopped him.

- "'No, no!' she said quickly. 'That would spoil it. I've an idea that's ever so much better!' She turned to Jacky. 'If we sent a carriage for your father, would he come and paint some pictures of our flowers here? There's a garden outside besides, and a summer house, and a piazza with climbing roses, and I've been wanting to have some pictures of them for a long time. Please ask him if he will come.'
 - "'And tell him,' put in the gentleman, 'that it's a business proposition.'
- "'Prop-o-si-tion,' repeated Jacky carefully. He wished he could ask the Teacher Lily close by to tell him what it meant; she'd know, surely.
- "'Just say business, and he'll understand,' said the lady, smiling kindly, 'And we'll hope to see him to-morrow.'
 - "'Oh, no!' cried Jacky, eagerly. 'Not to-morrow, please!'

"'Why not?' asked the gentleman.

"'Why, you see,' explained Jacky, earnestly, 'your flowers here in the Glass House are going to have a party to-night, and they'll be all tired out to-morrow!'

"Both the lady and gentleman laughed at this, but they said that they quite understood, and would expect Mr. Fleming a day or two later.

"'You are a funny little boy!' said the soft-voiced lady. 'A flower-

party! What a pretty idea!'

"Jacky knew they thought he was making it up, but as he looked at the Queen Lily, he was certain that she nodded her stately white head approvingly. He thanked the lady and gentleman and ran out of the sweet, fairy-

feeling air of the Glass House, in a great hurry to tell Papa the 'business' news. And he knew that as he went all the flowers, though he could not hear them speak, were wishing him good luck."

Clumpety-bump! Bumpety-clump!
First a whinny and then a thump!
Cover your head, and listen and hark:
The Nightmares are trotting up out of the dark!

Do you know the Sand Man? 'Course you do! He must have played lots of tricks on you.

I suppose he knows

Why he tricks us and pricks us,

But I don't know, I tell you true.

He owns all the Dreams there are, and ought
To send us only the pleasant sort!

He sidles up 'round the nursery screen,
And smiles and talks,—I call it mean;
He pleases and teases,
And smooths and soothes,
And you see him closer and closer lean,
Till—presto change! With a cloppety-clack,
You're galloping off on a Nightmare's back!

It's a hideous creature, this Horse of Dreams;
Other beasts neigh, but this one screams!
It chortles, and snortles,
Careering and rearing,
Trying to smash all your bones, it seems!
You hold yourself on, as best you can,
But he ought to be punished, that old Sand Man!

He runs his stable for girls and boys,

Some stalls for Horrors, and some for Joys;

But this pet, I will bet,
Is the nastiest yet,

The Nightmare that's crossest and makes the most noise!

And he'll laugh if you ask him a single question:
He says it's "Conscience," or "Indigestion!"

With clumpety-bumps, and bumpety-thumps,
Up the chimney the Sand Man jumps . . .
Open your eyes: there's no more to fear;
The Nightmares have gone, and the day is here!
The Sand Man's Stable.

CHAPTER XI

THE RUNAWAY SHADOW

By this time Frank had learned how to Make-Believe and dream, so well and yet so sensibly, that he could have all sorts of Fairy adventures, and still live his every-day life like any other little boy.

This is how he got to know some of the strange folk who are only to be seen when the world is asleep in bed.

In the middle of the night, he suddenly sat up in his own bed. It was absolutely quiet; so quiet that you could almost *hear* the stillness. That is, you could hear such very tiny sounds so distinctly that they seemed as loud as cannon. A board creaked, and a mouse squeaked somewhere, and Frank positively jumped, as though he had heard a great noise!

He had a queer feeling that he was not quite awake, and that at any moment he might open his eyes and find that it was morning. But that was nonsense, of course, for his eyes were open already. Couldn't he see the whole nursery as plainly as could be? Wasn't the night-light flickering away on the little table just as usual, and the short white sash-curtain blowing softly in the night breeze?

But if he really was wide awake, what had awakened him? And why in the world should he feel in such a hurry? What could it be that he was going to do, that, apparently, he must do?

Almost without thinking what he was doing, he put both feet out of bed and stood up. It was not a bit cold, and he walked out of the room as gently as a mouse in his nightie and bare feet. At the time it did not even occur to him that he was not dressed. He felt very much excited, and as though he were just starting out on some thrilling adventure. He only wished he knew what it was going to be!

The hall outside was very dim and ghostly. There was one light at the end burning low, and shadows seemed to be moving about the walls. Shadows always move about, you will find, when there is a light turned very low.

Frank started down the stairs in the dark. And then, all at once, he saw that one of the shadows was coming down with him!

Now of course you will say that it was his own shadow, and since your

own shadow always goes about with you, there was nothing funny about that. But you are quite wrong, and too hasty, anyway. The lamp at the far end of the hall wasn't shining down the stairs at all, in the first place, so he couldn't possibly cast a shadow that way. And the only light in the house below was moonlight, and that cast a shadow behind him, quite in the ordinary way. This Shadow that he had suddenly noticed, came with him, and it was an extra Shadow.

It was long and thin and lanky like a scarecrow, with spidery legs that danced along faster than Frank himself could move. It seemed a jolly sort of Shadow, if one might judge by the way it frolicked and skipped and pranced.

Frank went down the long flight, not picking his way nearly so carefully as he usually did; partly because he was too much excited, and partly because he was so busy watching the Shadow. When they reached the bottom of the stairs, he was very much surprised,—for you know he was by nature a timid little boy, and shy with most strangers,—to find himself saying:

"If you please, are you my Shadow?"

The Shadow skipped ahead a step and then skipped back again.

"Why, of course not!" it said in a queer, wheezy voice like a little gust of wind through a keyhole. "Can't you see your own Shadow behind you? Lazy, poor-spirited thing, hanging onto you like that so as to be dragged along! Now I'm independent!"

And it gave another little hop, stopping with a jerk.

"But," persisted Frank, "if you're not my shadow, whose are you? And how did I happen to get you?"

The Shadow chuckled.

"I'm a runaway Shadow!" it confessed, without appearing to be in the least ashamed of it, "And you didn't get me. I got you!"

It chuckled again, and the chuckle sounded in some way unpleasant. Frank did not feel at all comfortable. What did "I got you" mean, anyway? It suggested something ogreish and horrid.

"Wh-what did you want me for?" he asked, rather faintly.

"I want," said the Shadow, slowly and firmly, "to become solid!" "Solid?"

"Yes! Flesh and blood and bone and muscle. Broad. Heavy. Thick through. You know: solid."

Frank still did not see what he could have to do with all this, but the Shadow seemed quite willing to explain,—almost too willing if anything.

"All truly ambitious shadows," it proceeded to say, jumping up and down from time to time, "want to become solid some day. First we start, all of us, by just being ordinary shadows attached to human beings,—like that silly thing of yours, trailing after you there! Then, if we are brave and strong, we break away from our mortal masters, and become runaway shadows like me! Then we trot about with various human creatures till we find one that we think is about the right size, and then we use that person to make us solid!"

This certainly sounded awful.

"How?" gasped Frank, feeling his legs shake under him. "How do you —use a person to make you solid?"

"First," wheezed the Shadow, "we take one of his hands; and then we take the other. And then his feet. And his arms. And his legs. And—"

"Oh, please stop," cried poor Frank, really terrified. "What happens to—to the human being, after you've taken the whole of him?"

"Happens!" repeated the Shadow, with dreadful cheerfulness. "Why, nothing happens to him. There isn't any human being left for anything to happen to!"

Frank felt quite ill with fear and hopelessness. Now he wished with all his heart that it had been a dream. And what a goose he had been to climb out of his nice, comfortable bed and go hunting adventures in the middle of the night!

"Suppose," he plucked up enough courage to say, "the human being doesn't want to be used up to make any shadow solid?"

"Oh, well," said the Shadow, "we don't mind a little thing like that,—his wanting to or not, you know. But anyway, you won't be much bothered. It doesn't take long, and it doesn't hurt!"

Frank shivered.

They were standing in the big lower hall in the moonlight,—at least, Frank and the Runaway Shadow were standing: Frank's own Shadow still lay meekly upon the floor. It did not say a word, and he could not know that it took even enough interest in what was going on to listen.

The boy had never seen the moonlight as brilliant. To his surprise the windows were all open and the curtains pushed back, so that there was nothing to keep the brightness out, and the whole place was as light as day.

"Come on!" said the cruel Shadow, reaching out one claw-like, ghostly hand.

"Oh, don't-don't, please!" begged Frank. "Oh, not yet, please! It

—it—" he tried to think of some good argument,—"it's such a sudden way to end!" he finished, appealingly. "I haven't gotten used to the idea yet!"

The Shadow considered this point.

"Well, perhaps it is sudden," it acknowledged, presently. "And as I've waited so long already, I might just as well wait a bit longer. I've got you, anyway,—as I think I mentioned before,—so it won't make so very much difference. How much time do you think you will want to get used to the idea?"

Frank wanted to say, "Just as much time as possible, if you please!" but he was so frightened, and yet so relieved at getting a little breathing space, that he could only gasp out, "Oh, thank you!"

Before the Shadow could speak again, there arose the queerest noise, like horses stamping very vigorously. Frank was much puzzled. From the sound he would have supposed that he was in a stable of some sort. But Auntie Sue had no stable, and this was, instead, her large, quiet hallway, with the palm trees standing about, and the plaster statues glimmering in the corners, and the lovely white moonlight shining peacefully on the floor.

"What's that?" he asked the Shadow wonderingly. In fact, he was so interested and surprised that for the moment he almost forgot to be afraid of that cruel being.

"Those are the horses from the Sand Man's stables," said the Shadow. "There go the Pleasant Dreams to visit nice little boys and girls who always do what is right."

Through the moonlight trotted a number of misty Fairy horses, white and beautiful to look at, tossing their snowy manes as they went. They were shod with silver, and they had glittering saddles on their backs, and bridles that jingled with the music of a hundred silver bells. They trotted across the great hall, and then, rising in twos and threes, leaped through the open window and bounded up the slope made by the shimmering, slanting moonbeams. They looked, these Dream Horses, as if they were galloping straight up to the moon itself.

"Oh, how pretty!" Frank cried. "Do all those belong to the Sand

"All those, and more too, my little man!" said a soft, soothing voice at his elbow.

"Oh, so you're there, are you?" said the Shadow.

Frank found himself looking into a smiling and yet rather a sly face.

"Are you the Sand Man?" he asked, gravely.

"Yes, my child, yes; I am the Sand Man!"

He smiled more than ever, but he still looked sly, as though you ought not to trust him too much.

And that is one curious thing about the Sand Man: sometimes he is as kind as kind can be,—one of the very nicest of all the Fairy People in fact; but at other times he is freakish and disagreeable, playing all sorts of tricks on us, and making us altogether wretched.

As Frank looked at him, he saw a bent old man with a huge bag carried on his back, of course; and he was all over the colour of sand. In the moonlight he glimmered and shone in spots just the way the sea-shore does at night. He had long hair and a long beard, and when he spoke or moved it was oh! so softly and slowly,—just like grains of sand trickling gradually through an hour-glass.

"You ought to see some of the rest of his horses!" said the Shadow. "Come on, Old Gentleman! Show him your Nightmares!"

"Oh, I don't want to see them!" cried Frank, much distressed. "I don't want to see a Nightmare!"

But the Sand Man was bending closer to him now, and his smile looked a little wicked, and his eyes were very big and deep and bright.

"Don't want to? You can't help yourself!" he whispered. "There is one coming for you now!—Listen!"

A wild sound of galloping echoed through the hallway.

"A Nightmare!" gasped Frank, in terror.

"Hurrah!" shouted the merciless Shadow. "We will mount it together, Human Child, and ride into the Moon Bon-Fire! It won't bother me, but it will burn you up, and I shall have your body to become solid with!"

"But moonlight doesn't burn!" cried Frank, listening to the Nightmare galloping nearer and nearer.

"Oh, doesn't it? Indeed it does! Only, it feels cold instead of hot. I will burn off a finger or two from you at a time, until—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Sand Man. "Look at the Bon-Fire, little boy!"

Trembling very much, Frank glanced out of the window, and there, sure enough, was what appeared to be a mass of leaping, silver-white flames. He tried to tell himself that it was only the bushes in the garden tossing their leafy branches in the wind and the moonshine, but he was far too frightened to think clearly.

Out of the darkness at the end of the hall came a huge shape, grey and

misty, with flaming eyes. It was the Nightmare! Frank could hear it snort and paw the floor.

Almost before he knew it, he was seized by the Sand Man and the Shadow, and found himself clinging to the great, plunging horse, too frightened to scream out loud, though he found himself trying to, all the time.

The next moment, followed by another shout of laughter from the Sand Man, the Nightmare with one mighty spring cleared the window sill, and landed, it seemed, in the very heart of the Moonlight Bon-Fire.

A strange, cold feeling struck Frank's right hand and arm, and spread up to his shoulder. He tried to lift his arm but could not; he felt numb all over. He found it impossible even to speak. What was happening to him?

He saw the wicked Runaway Shadow waving something in the air most triumphantly; it was a solid hand,—Frank's hand!

Suddenly there was a cry from somewhere close by, and another Shadow sprang into sight and flung itself upon the Runaway. They struggled violently for the hand. Meanwhile the Nightmare plunged and reared in the midst of the flames of moonlight, and Frank clung to its back as well as he could, while the two Shadows fought and wrestled about him,—sometimes floating in the air, sometimes disappearing close to the ground.

Then he saw the Runaway Shadow turn and fly quickly away, with a sort of wail of defeat. And the other cried:

"I have won! He will not become solid through you, anyway! Here is your hand again!"

The Nightmare was moving more quietly now. They seemed to have left the Bon-Fire and were galloping steadily through a soft and silvery halflight.

"Hold on tight!" said the new Shadow. It seemed to be sitting behind Frank now, on the horse. "It won't be much further.—See! There is the light in the nursery window. In another moment we will be there!"

"But—who are you?" asked Frank drowsily. He was feeling ridiculously sleepy after all his excitement.

"I am your own Shadow," was the reply. "I simply could not sit by and see that monster burn you up! Who wants the creature to be solid anyway? It is quite bad enough as it is!"

"Oh, are you my very own Shadow? Thank you,—thank you for saving me!" cried Frank.

They were at the window by this time, and the Nightmare was just clambering in.

"Tell me," went on the boy, "shall I be able to talk with you again, dear Shadow?"

"Whenever you like," said his Shadow obligingly. "We're friends now!— Ah, here we are!"

And they landed on the rug beside Frank's bed in the nursery.

Things got more and more vague and crazy and dim; he seemed to feel his Shadow fastening his recovered hand onto his wrist, and to hear a faint "Good-bye"... and sat up in bed to find Nurse bending over him.

"Well, well, Master Frankie!" she said anxiously. "You've been crying out *that* loud, off and on for half an hour! Was it a very bad dream, dearie?"

He wondered mistily if it really could have been a dream, but— "Why, your right hand's as cold as if it had been frozen!" said Nurse. You're old, and ugly, and silly, and cheap, You've got no hair, I know, You look just the same, awake or asleep,— That's why I love you so.

You aren't of wax, your joints are weak, Your head wobbles to and fro, You never bend, you cannot squeak,— That's why I love you so.

To keep you hidden is rather fun,
And no one will ever know;
You're my baby doll,—my only one,—
And that's why I love you so!

Arabella's Lullaby.
(Sung by Jenny.)

CHAPTER XII

THE DOLL IN THE ATTIC

ENNY was rather scornful about dolls. She declared them babyish and beneath her dignity, and laughed at Nancy, and Margot too,—for Margot, big girl as she was, still liked to play with dolls. But many persons in this world, grown-up persons as well as children,—make fun of things that secretly they are fond of themselves. Jenny was full of faults, as you have seen if you have read this story, but it was not often that she did anything sly. However, it turned out that she had been rather sly about one thing, and Frank and Margot found it out.

They had been playing in the attic of the Grey House, one hot afternoon when both Motherkin and Auntie Sue declared that it was altogether too hot for them to race about in the sun. Frank had not liked the idea at first, for whenever he thought of the Kents' attic he always thought too of that dreadful and shameful "Pot o' Gold" party. But, of course, when he once got up there, he could not help having a good time.

I hope you like attics, too. All children should, for they are splendid places in which to Make-Believe. In an attic are always stored away any number of things which the Grown-Ups have no further use for, but which may still be interesting and mysterious. Old boxes, trunk-trays and drawers are apt to have delightful odds and ends tucked away in them,—scraps of you couldn't say what, and all the more attractive because of that. There may be handles, and frames, and tops of things, and coils of wire, and pieces of string, and old magazines, and bits of cloth and silk too small for anything except patchwork quilts or dolls' bonnets.

And the large, shabby old chairs, with the sunbeams slanting in upon them under the eaves, can be Judges' seats, or Queens' thrones; a horse-hair sofa makes a fine fortress, and the dark corners can be anything—anything at all, from bears' dens and robbers' caves, to some of the many secret entrances to Fairyland itself!

In these corners, Margot and Frank had taken to hunting about for the holes and webs in which spiders and mice made their homes and took care of their families. After Frank's experience with the Cellar Mouse, he was ready to believe that even spiders could be pleasant, "if you knew them!" And he wanted to prove it to Margaret.

"Of course," he said, "we might not be able to find a spider who was willing to talk, but—"

But Margot was not paying much attention to what he said.

"Oh, see here!" she exclaimed, rummaging about behind a dust-covered chest of drawers. "Here are some of Jenny's books! So this is where she comes to do all that studying of hers! Think of reading regular lessons in vacation!"

"Auntie Sue says," returned Frank, who disliked Jenny but had a guilty impression that he ought to say as nice things about her as possible for that reason if for no other, "that Jenny's clever,—cleverer than any of the rest of us."

Margot nodded.

"I guess she is," she agreed. "She certainly does her lessons scrumptiously, Frank, and she never seems to have to work hard over them either. And so it's here she does it! Well, I think it's very good of her. I wouldn't —in summer!"

"Maybe she likes it," suggested Frank. "And besides it's 'most school-time, isn't it?"

It was a new idea to Margaret, that she should like it.

"Why,—yes! Maybe she does like it," she said wonderingly. "It seems funny, of course. I can't understand any one *liking* lessons; but Jenny's always been funny in lots of ways. We'll not tell her we saw the books, shall we?"

"No; she might be cross about it.

But at that moment, Margot, while putting back the lesson-book she had picked up, gave a quick cry of amazement.

"Well, Frankie Merton, will you please look here!" she gasped.

Frank peered into the cobwebby, dusty dimness.

"I don't see anything," he said, "except a sort of bundle of clothes, or-"

"Exactly!" said Margot. And very slowly, she took the bundle and lifted it to the light. Then, holding it at arms' length, she said impressively:

"It's a doll!"

At first Frank did not understand.

"A doll!" he repeated.

"Oh, but you're stupid!" cried Margot, stamping her foot.

Little girls often think little boys stupid;—but not oftener than little boys think them stupid.

"Well," said Frank, somewhat defiantly, "why shouldn't it be a doll? And Motherkin told you it was unladylike to stamp your foot."

"I know it's unladylike, and I dont feel ladylike, and I don't care, anyway," said Margot, stamping again. "Don't you see?— It's Jenny's doll;—it must be!"

"But Jenny thinks dolls are silly."

"She says she thinks dolls are silly! And she laughs at me, and at poor Nancy, because we still like to play with them. I don't mind much, but it makes Nancy feel—horrid! And here she is with a doll of her own,—Jenny!"

Light had dawned on Frank As he understood, he felt that nasty, mean sort of pleasure you do feel sometimes when some one you don't like has done something underhanded, so you can blame them with a clear conscience!

"And she's kept it here, without telling any one!" he said.

"And played with it, all by herself,—on the quiet! Why, I've lived with Jenny since I was a baby, and I never even knew she had a doll before!"

"And it's dressed up, too,—isn't it?" said Frank. For the doll wore a gown of white muslin with bright pink dots.

"It's a new dress!" exclaimed Margot. "And of course Jenny made it herself.— Jenny, mind you, who hates to sew, and won't sew! Oh, I do think she's a mean, sneaky thing! Making fun and teasing and calling us babies, because we played with dolls,—and doing the very same things herself on the sly!"

Though the dress was evidently new, the doll was as evidently old; and it could never, in its best days, have been a very beautiful creature. It did not have a wig, like really grand dolls; its hair was painted in lumps and scallops on its china head, and its eyes did not open nor shut, but were set for all time in a stony stare. No one ever learned how nor when Jenny had first gained possession of it. Probably it had been three or four years before, and she had treasured it all that time and played with it secretly long after she would have been ashamed to do so before others.

"I'll tell you!" said Margaret. "We'll teach that Jenny-girl a lesson! We'll hide this doll, and not tell her a word about it, and see what she does when she comes up here next to look for it, and finds it gone!"

This idea struck Frank as a good one. They weren't doing Jenny any harm; they wouldn't hurt the doll, they wouldn't keep it from her longer than was necessary to make her eat humble-pie, and—it would serve her

right to make her admit she had lost it and ask if any one knew where it was! "Only she won't," he said to Margot. "She'll pretend she never had a doll! You'll see!"

"Oh, nonsense!" exclaimed Margaret, confidently. "If she cared enough about it for this, she'll care enough about it to try to find out what has become of it! Go and peep over the bannisters, Frankie, and see if she's anywhere about."

Frank tip-toed to the head of the stairs, leaned over and listened. There was no sign of Jenny. So the two conspirators crept down the stairs and out of doors, Margot carrying the doll carefully.

"I don't know where to hide it!" she whispered. "Where do you think would be a good place?"

Frank thought hard, with frowning brows.

"I'll tell you!" he said suddenly. "Why shouldn't I take it home with me? She'd never think of its being there!"

"Goody! Splendid!" Margot tried to clap her hands, but could not, on account of the doll she was holding. Then she drew back, startled. "Oh,—look, Frank! There comes Funny! Do chase him away. He'll bark, and want to play, and I don't want to bring the others until after you've gone with the doll!"

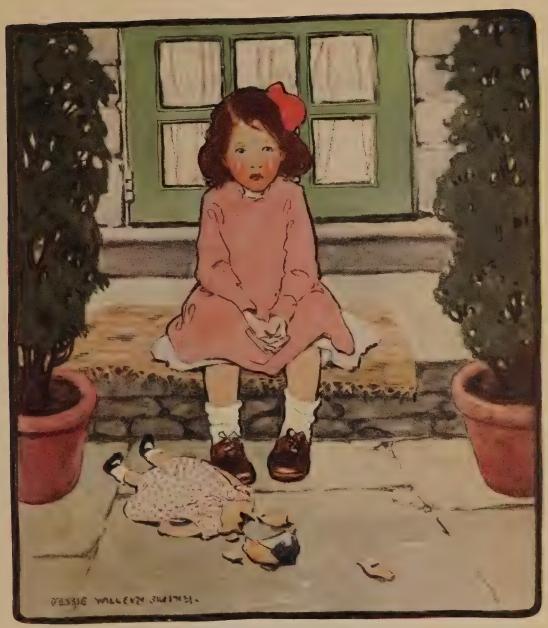
Frank threw a stick toward the farther wall, and sent Funny to get it; but before he could turn around, he heard a faint but despairing scream.

"Frank! Frank!" wailed Margot. "I've dropped it! I've broken the doll's head!"

She sank down on the step leading from the Grey House, and cried as though it had been her own heart that had been broken. There, indeed, lay Jenny's unfortunate doll on the flagged path, her china head in a dozen pieces.

Frank was so sorry he did not know what to do nor what to say. He felt sorry for the doll; a doll was made to be proudly shown and played with, and this one had never been, only looked at in secret. And now, on the day of its first outing, it had been smashed! Certainly that was a tragedy. And he felt sorry for Margot, because he knew that she would gladly have given up every one of her own dolls rather than have such a thing as this happen. And he felt—this was the queer thing,—sorriest of all for—Jenny!

He was not only sorry because she had lost her doll, but sorry because she had been found out in her little foolish weakness. And—do you know?—



A broken head-and heart



from that moment, Frank never felt quite the same about Jenny. She was not any longer an enemy, a horrid Thing, to avoid if possible, and punish if necessary; she was just a little girl, who had loved a doll and lost it. And he was so truly sorry for her that he wanted to cry, too.

But he begged Margot: "Don't! Please don't cry!" And then he began: "Perhaps we can mend—"

"Look at those pieces, Frank Merton!" sobbed Margot. "You couldn't mend that head in a million years! No; I'll just sit here and w-wait for J-jenny. Go and look for her, Frank. If you c-can find her, m-make her come right away." Margot choked. "I've got to tell her what I've done. I can do that, anyway."

But before Frank could start on his errand, they heard a voice close by,—a voice which they both knew quite well, yet which sounded strange to them:

"You needn't."

Jenny was standing there looking, not at either Margot or Frank, but at the broken doll. She was very pale.

"You needn't tell me," she said again, in that queer, different voice they had not heard before. "I know what you did. You went fussing and poking about my things, and you found,—Arabella." She didn't cry, as most little girls would have done, but she stopped for a moment, and lifted her eyes. "You sneaked, and spied, and stole my doll!" she said. "And now you've broken her, and you think all you need do is tell me what you've done! Well, you needn't bother. I know all about it, and I'll never play with you again."

"Jenny,—please!" pleaded Margot tearfully. "Won't you let me—" "I don't like to talk to you," said Jenny.

Then, very carefully, she picked up the pieces of coloured china which had once been poor Arabella's head, and went away with them. No one ever knew what she did with them.

There was a dreadful time for everybody, after this. Margaret rushed off, still weeping, to tell Motherkin all about it, and Mrs. Kent tried to make peace between the two little girls. But Jenny refused to be friends. She was not cross about it. For once, hot-tempered Jenny did not have any wish to fight, call names, "Nor do anything comforting like that!" as poor Margot complained. She just said coldly: "I don't like her any more," and appeared to think that this settled it.

But Margaret would not give up. And at last she had an idea.

"I've made Motherkin promise," Margot told Frank confidentially, "that she will not give me any Christmas presents this year, but will use *all* the money she and the rest would have spent on me, to buy a gorgeous new doll for Jenny!"

"Oh, that's splendid!" cried Frank. "Won't she be pleased!"

Margaret sighed.

"I—I hope so!" she said. "It's simply awful not being friends with her! But—but I don't suppose that the beautifullest doll in the whole world would make up to her for the one she lost. It wouldn't to me."

Mrs. Kent bought the doll,—a very splendid one indeed, with long, silky curls, and eyes that opened and shut, and two changes of clothes, and shoes and stockings. They decided not to give it to Jenny until Christmas, but Margot was much cheered up by the thought that it was ready and waiting.

Jenny had become a very different little girl lately,—not only toward Margaret. Perhaps she had brooded over the loss of her doll until she had gotten sulky; perhaps it was dawning on her that she had not made herself nearly so dear and necessary to her playmates as she might have; but, whatever the cause, she went about by herself most of the time, and would seldom play even with her sister Nancy.

You couldn't help being sorry for her. For, whether it was her own fault or not, she was horribly lonely.

Frank was just growing to the age, or rather to the point in his experience, when anybody's wretchedness hurt him too. And one day, when he came face to face with Jenny, something made him stop and say impulsively:

"Jenny, you—you never—never liked me much, I know. I'm sorry. And I'm sorry about the doll, and about—"

The words stuck in his throat. He couldn't quite bring himself to tell about the trick he had played on her.

But Jenny was staring at him with a queer, surprised look on her face. She seemed so unlike herself that he was surprised, too, and they stood for a moment gazing at each other as if they had been strangers until then.

"Thank you, Frank," Jenny said quietly, looking away from him. She hesitated just an instant, and then she said: "I'm sorry too. I mean, sorry that I always teased, and all that. But it isn't true that I didn't like you. It was just my way. I've always been queer, I guess. Anyway,—thanks!"

She turned to go, but he stopped her.

"Jenny," he said quickly, "won't you forgive Margot?—About the doll,

you know. She's feeling so dreadfully! And if you cared so much about the doll, why, I'm sure that—"

He paused; he couldn't give Margot's plan away of course; yet he felt that something should be said.

But Jenny just answered:

"Oh, yes, I forgive Margot. That's all right. But—I'm glad there's no chance of my ever having another doll. You see,—she was a—a—particular thing, somehow, that belonged just to me and to nobody else. I can't have her again, but anyway,—I needn't have any other doll in her place!"

She walked away quietly. And never, never had Frank felt so ashamed of himself. To think that *Jenny* could feel like that! . . .

Then he heard Margot sobbing. She had appeared from somewhere, and now was huddled in a little heap, crying her heart out.

"She doesn't want it!" she wept. "She won't like it,—she doesn't want a new doll after all! I heard what she said. I'm going to tell Motherkin to burn that horrid, beautiful thing to-morrow!"

But Motherkin would not burn the doll.

"Wait till Christmas!" she said, very tenderly.

Oh, good-hearted children, take care of your Things; When you put on your clothes try to smile; Don't pull off the buttons, nor scold at the strings: It really will be worth your while.

Don't smudge up the leaves in the history books,
Don't tug at the nursery curtain,
Don't pull till the pictures fall down from their hooks;
They truly don't like it, I'm certain.

It's seldom you give them the smallest kind words;— Now honestly, isn't that so? Of course they're not puppies, nor kittens, nor birds, But they may have *some* feelings, you know.

If you're nice, you will find that your Things are the same, You good little girlies and boys;
So don't drop the tea-cups; it fills them with shame,
And besides—it does make such a noise!

Things.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LIBRARY THAT CAME TO LIFE

N September Frank went to school with the other children, and after the first month liked it. He never was very quick at his lessons, but Miss Clark was not too strict, and he got through them somehow. He was very well and strong that autumn, and the Doctor-Man pretended to wrestle with him whenever they met!

One afternoon Nancy stayed till dusk with Frank, and they tried to help each other study their lessons. I say tried, for they were not very successful; they would get to the middle of a sum or an example, and then one or the other would start to talk about something that really interested them, and the school books would be forgotten for another five minutes. Nancy sighed once and said that she wished she could learn things as quickly as Jenny; her sister never had any trouble about studying, but got her sums right, and even spelled words the way they were spelled in books! To Nancy this seemed quite wonderful!

When Nancy had gone, Frank sat down on the hearth-rug, and looked at the pile of lesson-books, and the smudged-up slate, and the stubby pencil which had fallen onto the floor and rolled under a chair, and he sighed, too, but crossly. It did seem a bother to have to learn things like that,—where countries were, and what they were like, and how many people were in them, and so on; and the way to make a lot of silly little numbers move about and settle down in a certain position at the end of a column; and how to write o's round, and x's straight, and—and all the rest of it.

Then he looked at the fire, which was sputtering away quite pleasantly, and tried to see if the Kobold were anywhere to be seen. And then he began to think about tea, and wondered what they would have, and—then he began to feel sleepy. He must have fallen asleep at last, just for a moment, for he had that queer feeling that you have when you are just going to begin to dream. You know it, don't you? All mixed up and drowsy, and yet interested, and wondering what is going to happen. And the clock which had been ticking quietly enough all along, all at once grew very loud indeed.

And the ticking changed a little bit at a time, until it made words.

When clocks talk they always do it that way, you know; they never just begin to speak, but get to it by degrees, as this clock did: "Tick tock! Tick tock!

—Tack tuck! Tack tuck!—Wack wuck! Wack wuck!—Wack wup!

Wack wup!" And finally came the two perfectly clear words: "Wake up!

Wake up!"...

Frank jumped; and looked all around him to see who had spoken. But there was no one in the library. Then he looked at the clock to see what time it was. To his surprise it was gone. And sitting on the mantel-piece in its place was a strange little man with a round body, and spindly arms shaped something like clock-hands. It was he, of course, who was repeating "Wake up! Wake up!" in that steady, sharp, ticking manner. Beside him was a little gong, and in one hand he held a hammer, and when Frank sat up and stared at him he raised the hammer and brought it down upon the gong, hitting it with hard, regular blows. As he struck, he counted aloud: "One—two—three—four—five. There! That's done.—So you've waked up at last, have you?" He threw the hammer down. "It was high time!" he added sharply.

"Why, what nonsense!" exclaimed Frank. "I only-"

"Of course it's nonsense," agreed the round man. "Everything's nonsense to-night, from five o'clock on. It's Hallowe'en."

Frank had heard of Hallowe'en, of course, but he couldn't remember what he had heard about it.

"Is it a-a sort of Nonsense Night?" he asked.

"Tick tock,—yes. Tick tock,—it's a sort of a holiday night for the Things. Tick tock!"

"What things?" Frank wished to know.

"Why,—Things!" said the tick-tocking person, impatiently. "Furniture; ornaments; pictures; books; rugs; dishes: *Things*."

"Oh," said Frank, feeling very much puzzled. "I didn't know that the Things around us every day were alive."

"They aren't," said the man on the mantel-piece.

"But you told me-" began Frank.

"Who said I didn't?" demanded Tick Tock.

"But-but that's nonsense!" was all Frank could think of to say.

"Of course it is," said the mantel-piece person cheerfully.

"And what are you?" asked the boy.

He thought the Thing looked a little anxious as it said quickly, "What do you think I look like?"

Frank considered a moment, and then returned: "A big cracker,—or a lozenge, I don't know which!"

"There!" clicked the little person. "That's what it was that I knew I looked like! I couldn't think, myself. Of course, I hoped it was the moon. Every one in my family wants to look like the moon, but we can't all be as handsome as that! Allow me to introduce myself: the Clock!"

"How do you do?" said Frank politely. "Are you-a Thing?"

"What else would you call me?" snapped the Clock. "Please use your mind, if you have any!"

"I think you're very rude indeed!" said the boy. But the Clock did not pay the slightest attention to the interruption.

"I suppose," it proceeded, "that you can see I am not an animal, nor a river, nor a tree, nor a Human Being,—Ugh, the horrid things: I certainly wouldn't want to be one of them!—Therefore I must be a Thing."

"I see," said Frank, thinking this the simplest answer. But the Clock wouldn't permit that for an instant.

"You don't!" it said violently. (At least, being a Thing, I suppose "it" is more suitable than "he.") "You don't see that or anything else, so don't pretend!"

"Are the other Things—" Frank hesitated, not wanting to make it crosser by saying the word "alive" again; he decided to try:"—having a holiday, too?"

"Look around you!" said the Clock, pointing with one sharp-pointed, black hand.

Frank looked obediently. He could hardly believe his eyes when he had done so. There wasn't anything in the room that looked the way it usually did. He might just as well have been in a perfectly strange place. Indeed, to tell the truth, it hadn't the appearance of a library at all. It looked something the way a museum and a toy-shop and a zoo might look if all three had been in an earthquake and gotten jumbled up together.

A bronze horse was pawing the top of the book-case; the Japanese prints on the walls had come to life, and the little figures like gaudily dressed dolls were moving about with parasols and fans, crossing wee bridges or picking the tiniest of cherry-blossoms. A paper weight in the shape of a frog was hopping about the table, and a small plaster-of-Paris cupid was trying to get out of its way, crying: "You horrid thing, don't you come near me!"

Something was moving near the fireplace, something large and dimly yellow in colour, but before Frank had time to look at it closely enough to see

what it was, the Clock gave a jerky, creaky, angry noise, and said: "There! They're at it again!"

On either side of the Clock stood candle-sticks of pretty pink and white and blue china. One was a shepherd and one a shepherdess, and as a rule they stood as stiffly as the candles they held with so much patience. But to-night the shepherdess's flowered petticoat rustled as she took dainty little dancing steps from side to side, and smiled at the shepherd. He had taken off his gay, ribboned hat, and was bowing to her with a very grand air indeed.

"Will you dance with me, Shepherdess?" he asked in a tiny, musical voice that sounded like a tea-cup struck very lightly with a silver spoon.

The Shepherdess cast down her eyes, and laid her gilded crook across her heart.

"Oh, Shepherd!" she sighed. "I fear it would not be good manners! We have never been introduced!"

The Clock gave a whirr which expressed disgust and temper if it expressed anything.

"Didn't I tell you?" it ticked harshly. "They're at it again, just as I said! Whenever the Things have a 'night off,' those silly Candle Sticks start mooning and simpering and wasting time. I wish they'd fall off the mantel-piece and get smashed, both of them: that I do!"

But Frank was interested. "Oh!" he exclaimed. "I wish I could see them dance!"

"Well," said the Clock, "maybe if you stay right here and watch them carefully for a couple of hundred years, you will. Maybe; but it's not at all likely. They don't dance. Bless you, they're far too busy talking about it, ever to get down to really doing it! I've sat on this mantel-piece for ten years, and I've never seen 'em move a single step nearer each other. Lazy idiots!"

"But," Frank ventured to say, "you don't move either."

The Clock whirred like a little automobile.

"Who ever said I did?" it wheezed furiously. Frank could see it tremble as though its feelings were too much for it.

"Why, you did,—at least, I thought that was what you meant," explained Frank, surprised. "You said just now that you had sat on that mantel-piece for ten years, and I—"

This time the Clock interrupted him by giving a jump into the air. It landed with such a frightful bump that the Shepherd and the Shepherdess screamed with terror. It really seemed to have broken something in this out-

burst of bad temper, for a loud click-clacking sounded from the inside of it, and one of its black hands hung limply. As it settled down, it sighed heavily and hoarsely.

"I've done it again!" it muttered wearily. "I've put myself out of order! Well,—" it cheered up for a moment,—"I shall have a rest, anyway, and when they find they can't mend me, they'll give me a vacation and send me to town. That is always interesting. Last time I was there, I met a Grandfather's Clock which told the most exciting war-stories; and there was a little French watch which had once been stolen by a pickpocket, and was most amusing—"

"But suppose," said Frank, "that you missed something here?" He knew he was irritating the Clock, but he felt mischievous. "Suppose that while you were away the Candle-Sticks really had their dance after all?"

A queer sound came from the Clock: it was something like a scream, mixed up with a click, a tick, a whirr and a wheeze.

"You've-spoiled-my-whole-vacation!" it stormed.

This effort was altogether too much for it, and it fell silent. Probably it had fainted from excitement.

And then Frank found out what it was that he had seen moving among the shadows at one side of the hearth. There was a low rumbling noise that might have been a growl or might have been a very big purr, and then—there was a roar. And a Tiger leaped out into the firelight, with its eyes blazing with green fire, and its tail lashing about in the most frightening way you can imagine.

"O-o-oh!" gasped Frank. "How did that get in here?" And he backed away in the direction of the hall door. For even a brave little boy may well be afraid of big, striped, yellow and black tigers, that have sharp white teeth or fangs, and that roar so that it sounds like a clap of thunder.

"I belong here!" growled the fierce beast, prowling up and down in front of the fire, but, much to Frank's relief, not attempting to leave that part of the room. "If I could move away from this fire-place, I'd eat you up.—A-a-g-h-r-R!" And this time his roar made the whole house shake.

It made Frank shake too, and he whispered very timidly: "Wh-why can't you get away f-from that part of the room,—if you please, Tiger?"

For though he was full of curiosity as usual, he thought it best to be as polite as possible.

But it seemed there was no pleasing the creature. It roared more savagely than ever, and thundered:

"I'm not a Tiger; I'm a Rug!"

"Oh!" murmured Frank, more puzzled than before. Then he remembered, and felt a little better. "Why, you're a Thing, too!" he cried. "Of course!—You're the tiger-skin rug that always used to be in front of the fire, till Auntie Sue was afraid it would get hurt by sparks! She—"

"I did get hurt by sparks!" roared the Rug. "There are two big holes

burned in the left side of my back!"

"And so," went on Frank, "she had it—I mean you—moved to one side.
—I'm sorry, I'm sure, if you got burned."

"Yah!" snarled the Tiger-skin, violently. "You aren't sorry. I won't have you sorry! You just dare to come over here and say you're sorry, and I'll show you!"

Naturally, Frank edged further away.

"Indeed I won't come over there!" he said earnestly. "But I don't see what I've done to make you so cross!"

"For one thing," said the Rug ferociously, "you tipped a bowl of milk over me once. My coat is stiff yet! GrrrRR! You messy child!"

"Did it hurt you?" asked Frank humbly.

"It hurt my feelings!" bellowed the Tiger. "That's much worse!"

"I suppose it is," said Frank, to whom this was a new idea,—though he saw at once that there was something in it. "I didn't know Things had feelings."

"What did you suppose they had instead of feelings?" demanded the Creature, standing still long enough to put the question.

"Why, I hadn't thought-" Frank started to say.

"And you never will think!" said the Rug, very scornfully. And then it went on prowling.

Frank was just meditating on what would be the proper thing to say to it next, when he was called by a voice from the other side of the room:

"Little boy,—little boy!"

He turned quickly, and saw that one of the big volumes in the book-case was trying hard to push itself out. He ran over to it at once.

"Why, you're the Dictionary!" he exclaimed. "Are you a Thing, too?"

"Of course I am. Come, child, and help me. Am I too heavy for you? If not, please carry me as far as the table. And then we'll have a chat. I'm growing too old to get about comfortably without help."

It was rather hard to lift such a very big book, but Frank managed it at

last; and the Dictionary sat on end on the centre table in a very dignified manner, and fluttered its leaves as it talked.

"I am a General Instructor," it announced solemnly. "I instruct, little boy. I instruct!"

"Yes, I know," said Frank, rather nervously. "Your words are some of them very long, aren't they?"

"Very long," answered the Dictionary. "Miles long. Leagues long. But they instruct. Possibly,—I say only possibly, mind you,—I may instruct you."

"I'm sure you could instruct me if you wanted to," said Frank, with a sigh. "I'm very stupid. But I don't believe you'd waste time on the things I want to know."

"And what are the things that you want to know?" asked the Book.

"Sums, and spelling, and where rivers are, you know, and what year they threw the tea into the sea, and all that sort of thing."

"It sounds rather mixed, the way you put it," the Dictionary said doubtfully. "However, that is probably because, as you say, you are unusually stupid. Why don't you ask some of my little second-cousins, the School Books? They go in for all sorts of light matters."

Frank suddenly remembered his lessons which he and Nancy had worked on so long that day. He looked about him quickly. "They were here," he said. "Why,—yes! There they are!"

Sure enough, the Geography was walking about, arm in arm with the American History, and the Arithmetic was having a heated discussion with the Slate Pencil.

"Why don't you do it right, while you are about it?" he heard the Arithmetic demand. "It's most annoying to show you the rules over and over again, and then, in spite of everything one can do, have it come all wrong!"

"'Tisn't our fault," returned the Slate sulkily,—from a short distance.

"I try to put down the right figures, I'm sure," squeaked the Pencil, "but my Boy won't let me, except by accident. I have to do what he wants, you know, whatever I may know myself. I can hear you give out the answers to the sums right enough,—and so could he if he would pay attention; but he's such a dunce that he doesn't seem to be able to! And when I start to write six he's just as likely as not to make it five or seven. I'm sorry for you, but I've got feelings myself!"

"And how about me?" spoke up the Slate indignantly; and it stood squarely on end. "Do you suppose I like to be covered with silly, scratchy

mistakes and sponged off every two minutes? It's very bad for my temper, very, that rubbing out and rubbing out all the time. I don't mind it once in a while, but when it keeps up like this, it—well, it gets on my nerves and that's a fact!"

Frank felt like crying with shame over his own dull wits. It is really awful, believe me, to hear what your school books think of you. One of these days you may have some sort of experience like Frank's, and if you've been slow and careless at your lessons you'll feel just the way he did. Of course the boys and girls who take pains hear nice things about themselves. Frank heard one little voice from the sofa where Nancy had left her composition book:

"You poor things!" it said. "I'm so sorry for you! I'm very lucky myself. My little Girl tries so hard that I truly like to have her write in me. Of course," it added, with a pleasant little chuckle, "she doesn't write very well yet, but she's getting on, and she's just as good as gold!"

The Dictionary gave a deep laugh.

"She had to come to me to find out how to spell 'Guess,' " it said. "And she hunted all through the 'g—e—s' part for ever so long. Then I opened at 'g-u-e'—just as though it had been by accident, and she found the word and was happy!"

"Yes, indeed," agreed Frank's Geography. "Any book will help any one who really tries. But that Boy of ours!— Do you know, he came across 'strait' in me to-day, and just put it down as a 'straight river'!"

Frank swallowed his mortification, as the Dictionary looked at him sternly.

"And what is a 'strait,' please?" he asked meekly.

The Dictionary cleared its throat. At least, it sounded rather like that, thought I suppose it couldn't have been, since it hadn't any throat to clear. Then it began impressively: "A strait is a narrow passage between two seas. It—"

A voice interrupted from the lower shelf in the book-case:

"There's something to be said on the Boy's side, brother."

"The Latin Dictionary," explained the big Book on the table. "Let me introduce you."

"The word 'strait,' " proceeded the Latin Dictionary, as though it had not even heard the other, "has its root in the Latin 'strictus,' from which 'strait' and 'strict' are derived; also constricted, restricted; also cramped, defined by common usage as narrow, and also straight—"

"But we aren't talking about all that," broke in the Geography book impatiently. "The lesson I am speaking of was about the Straits of Dover—"

"Talking of straits," snapped a sharp voice from the broad arm of an easy chair, "I'm full of that last scrap in the Dardanelles, where the Allied fleets—"

"Don't pay any attention to that!" the Dictionary said to Frank. "It's nothing but the Daily Paper,—cheap stuff! Why, people don't even keep it! They use it to wrap up the laundry in, or start fires!"

The Paper crackled angrily.

"I tell you," it cried, "I'm more important in these days than a whole Public Library! I tell of real things that happen to real people in real places! I say I am more important—"

"You would be if you told the truth," said the Dictionary. "Keep quiet anyway!"

Before the Newspaper could answer this, a confused babble of voices came from one of the long shelves of books:

"Why don't we all show this boy how to do his lessons, just this once?"
... "Yes, yes! We are read so seldom, we need a little exercise" ... "I'm out of practice!" ... "Well, a good action never hurt any one." ... "If any one ever needed help he does!" ... "Of course, he's an awful dunce!" ... "That's a fact, but all the more reason—"

In a moment, the books were tumbling out of the shelves and bumping busily along the floor, all talking at once.

One prettily bound volume came to the edge of the shelf, but did not jump off. Balancing itself there, it cried: "Come, Frank! Don't bother with them! While they're doing your lessons,—and they said they were going to, anyway,—come and play with me. I've ever so many stories to tell you! Can't you guess what I am? I'm a Story Book!"

Frank ran over to see, and the book opened itself invitingly before him. It was full of pictures, but the pictures had now become little windows through which he could see all sorts of real scenes. Here was a lovely Princess leaning out of a tower, and here was a Knight in full armour riding a prancing horse,—and the horse was white and handsome and did prance, too! And here were some funny little Dwarfs dancing hand in hand; and here was a glimpse of Santa Claus and his sleigh. From the pages of the Story Book came a soft tinkling sound like the chime of small, sweet bells, and the silvery music of it was so fascinating that Frank forgot all about his lessons, which the busy Books were so kindly doing for him.

"Oh, these are lovely stories!" he cried eagerly.

But suddenly there was a silence. He heard the Dictionary saying slowly:

"My friends, I fear it is useless. He does not want to know how to study. We have done his lessons for him, and he did not even care to see how they were done, so that another time he might do them himself. We have done it this once, but we can do it no more. After this, if he wants to show that he is grateful, he will try to do the work without help, and be a credit to us as well as to himself. For we stand ready to help him at any time, do we not,—all of us?"

"All of us!" cried the books as with one voice.

There began a jumbled, bumpy noise, and Frank saw them all hurrying back to the book-shelves.

Everything in the room was talking now; everything was moving about as though in high excitement. The Clock had roused itself, and was giving a very shaky tick-tock now and then, dozing in between; the Tiger-skin Rug was roaring and prowling more fiercely than ever; the Shepherd and Shepherdess were bowing and waving their crooks, the toad paper weight was jumping, the plaster Cupid was crying, the Japanese-Print People were scurrying about like ants, carrying parasols, crossing bridges, picking cherry-blossoms; everything was in motion, and making as much noise as possible.

The Things were certainly alive now with a vengeance! The hubbub made Frank dizzy. He felt as though he were in a nightmare. The Things seemed laughing at him, and all at once, the Tiger crouched as though for a spring. There was an awful roar. . . .

Frank cried out in terror, and—saw Auntie Sue smiling at him. "You fell asleep, dear," she said. "Did you have a bad dream? I thought I heard you call."

Frank rubbed his eyes. The room was just as usual. The Things were perfectly quiet now. How had they managed to settle down in such a short time?

"Jenny Kent is here," added Auntie Sue.

Frank saw the red curls bobbing in the firelight.

"I came over to get Nancy's copy book," said the little girl. "You were fast asleep, and talking to yourself like anything all the time I was looking for it! Thanks, Miss Merton," she went on, nodding to Auntie Sue. "I've got it all right." She smiled at Frank's puzzled look. "You're only half awake even now!" she said.

"Good night, Jenny," said Auntie Sue.

"'Night!" returned Jenny, and was off.

Frank sat motionless on the hearth rug in front of the fire. He was still a trifle dizzy after his queer dream,—if it had been a dream. It seemed very real, as he thought of it.

"Dear me!" said Auntie Sue. "That clock has stopped again! I hope I

shan't have to send it to town to be put in order!"

Frank started. That didn't sound as though it had all been a dream!
... He thought of his lesson books, and looked to see. They were all on the floor beside him in a neat pile. Had he left them like that? He could not remember. He picked up the slate.

"Hurry up and get ready for supper," said Auntie Sue.

Frank still looked at the slate. He was certain sure now.

Those horrid sums which had puzzled him so had every single one been done,—and something told him, even before he had had time to prove it,—that they were every single one right!

Christmas presents and Christmas fun, Christmas candles and Christmas cheer; Christmas rewards by good deeds won, Things that are funny, and sweet, and dear!

But the splendidest gifts on the Christmas Tree Have never a wrapping, nor ribbon, nor card; It's Peace they bring to you and me, And make things easy that used to be hard!

They're strange,—those presents we never give,
And never show, and never get;
But the Christmas Spirit,—as long as you live,—
You'll always find is the best gift yet!

December 25th.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME MYSTERIES ARE CLEARED UP

T would take several books to tell of all the doings of Frank and the Kent children. You have already heard enough of their games, and their quarrels, and Motherkin's stories, and the daily play of Make-Believing. We have followed Frank more closely than the others, but I dare say they all had experiences not so very unlike his.

You see, nearly all nice children believe in Fairies, and to them Fairy things are always happening. If you are horrid in any way the Good People will hide the minute they hear you coming. But if you are cheerful, and obedient, and honest, and careful not to hurt anybody's feelings,—why, before you know it you will be noticing the hand of the Fairies in everything that happens.

We last heard about Frank on Hallowe'en. Christmas is a time when all things, however wrong, should come right, so we will just take a jump all the way on to December, and see how things came right for the five children in whom—I hope—you are interested.

For weeks beforehand there were the usual secrets and mysteries: every one whispering together in corners, and hiding bundles when some one else came by unexpectedly. Both Auntie Sue's house and the Grey House were littered with white tissue paper and red and green ribbons and shiny cord and sprigs of holly, and little gay cards to be tied to the packages. Frank was anxious to give all the Kents beautiful presents, and he and Auntie Sue did some most exciting shopping. She wanted to give them things too, and they spent hours tying up the pretty gifts they had chosen, and writing Christmas messages on the tags that were to go with them.

But Auntie Sue was very unlike her old self in these days. She was just as sweet and dear and loving as ever, but there was a sad, anxious look in her eyes all the time, and she was paler than she used to be. Frank heard the Doctor-Man say to her one day:

"You are a bundle of nerves, Miss Merton! If you don't look out, you'll turn into an old woman all at once!"

"Yes," said Auntie Sue, "that's just what I shall do, Doctor: turn into an old, old woman, all at once!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the good Doctor-Man, scowling at her in his

friendly way as he shook hands. "You've got to keep up your health and spirits for the sake of this youngster here,—who's a different lad from what he used to be, thank God!"

And Auntie Sue said never a word in reply.

Two days before Christmas, Frank and his aunt were tying up bundles as usual. They had not been able to decide whether his gift for Mrs. Kent, —a lovely lace scarf which he and Miss Merton had picked out together,—should be tagged: "For dear Mrs. Kent, with a Merry Christmas from Frank," or "For Motherkin, with Frank's love."

"I think, on the whole, that that's best," said Auntie Sue, bending over tne soft package so that he could not see her face; "For Motherkin, with Frank's love."—You do love her, don't you, darling?"

"Oh, yes!" he exclaimed eagerly. "Of course I love Motherkin! She—she's the very nicest person in the world!— Except you, Auntie Sue," he added.

"Thank you, dear," said Auntie Sue quietly, and kissed him. "Now let's fasten on the card, and—"

But Frank had a sudden thought.

"Auntie!" he said. "Do you know you haven't a present for Mother-kin? And she has an awfully nice one for you!"

"Has she? That's very sweet of her!" said Miss Merton, warmly, but without looking up.

"But did you forget? You haven't any for her?" persisted Frank.

"Ah, but I have!" said Auntie Sue. "I didn't forget, little Frank. I have a very wonderful, precious present for her, my dearest; one which she will like and value very much."

"Oh!" said Frank, much puzzled.

He could not imagine what it could be that Auntie Sue wanted to keep hidden from him. But evidently she did not want to talk about it, so he did not ask any more questions.

The Kents were to have a Christmas Tree!

Frank had never even seen one, and he was ever so excited. Billy told him that Santa Claus was going to come down from his Snow Land, the Night Before Christmas, with a packful of presents to be put on the Tree. Already Billy-Boy had carefully printed his Christmas wishes in crazy letters on at least a dozen pieces of paper, and sent them flying up the chimney in the draught from the fire.

From supper-time, on Christmas Eve, until the next afternoon, the

door of the parlour was to be kept shut, and then when it was opened they would see whether or not Santa Claus had felt kindly toward the Grey House that year!

As I have said, Billy-Boy was so eager and happy in the prospect that it was surprising to everybody when, on that bright, sparkling Christmas morning, he appeared with the marks of tears on his fat pink cheeks, and refused to take any interest in the Tree or anything else.

"I don't want to see any old Tree!" he announced, very crossly indeed; but there seemed to be more unhappiness than bad temper in his poor little woe-begone face.

Every one else had been gay until then; even Jenny had looked brighter than for some time past. But when they saw Billy's low spirits, they all felt miserable too, and tried their best to sympathise, and find out what in the world could be the matter!

But Billy did not seem to want to tell his trouble, whatever it was. Not at first, that is; but after a while it came out with a burst of choking sobs:

"Santa—Claus—didn't put the—things—on—the Tree—at all! It was Papa, an' Motherkin; I saw 'em!"

Poor little Billy's faith in Santa Claus and Fairies and the old dear Make Believe things had been badly unsettled. And it happened in this way:

Late on Christmas Eve, it seemed, when the other children were in bed,—where he should have been,—he had crept downstairs to take one peep into the parlour. He knew that he ought not to do it, but he did so want to see what Santa Claus looked like, and to find out if he had brought any of the things that had been printed on the little notes which had gone fluttering up the chimney.

And (on Motherkin's lap the tale was finished), he had found the door open, and the heavy curtains pushed back, from between them streamed a great deal of bright light; and Billy could distinctly hear Papa's voice saying:

"Look out! That candle isn't fastened on very tight. Put it on a steadier branch."

Then Motherkin had said.

"Be sure to hang Billy-Boy's things low down, where he can reach them himself!"

Billy had given one look into the room. He had seen the splendid,



I wish you could have seen Jenny's face when she saw the doll which Margaret gave her!

She took the big, golden-haired beauty in her arms, and just stared at her cousin.

"But—but—'she gasped,—"how in the world did you ever buy her? She must have cost thousands and millions and hundreds of dollars!"

"Not quite," said her mother, smiling. "She only cost what Margot's skates, and the 'Grimm's Fairy Tales,' and the new collar for Funny, and six coloured hair-ribbons would have cost, if she'd had them!"

Jenny could not understand at first, but Motherkin explained that the gifts which would have gone to Margaret from Mr. and Mrs. Kent and the children,—and Miss Merton and Frank too, for Margot had asked them to please join the plan too,—had never been bought. It had all gone for the doll.

"And after all," said Margot, rather timidly and tremulously, "you don't want a doll, Jenny. I heard you tell Frank so. But you don't have to—to keep her, nor play with her, you know; you can just th-throw her away, if you like. Only,—Motherkin thought you wouldn't mind my giving her to you, anyway,—and—"

Poor Margot was getting so nervous and tearful that she didn't know what she was saying. But Jenny cut her short.

"Throw her away!" she repeated, in a queer voice. "I'll keep her forever and ever!— Oh, Margot! Margot!"

And then she began to cry, and Margot did too, and the two little girls hugged each other and "made up" for all time.

"I'll call her Arabella!" declared Jenny. And by that Margot and Frank knew that she had taken the new doll into her heart of hearts.

Nancy squeezed the hands of her sister and cousin, and, after starting twice to say something and weakening both times, finally made up her mind to go through with it.

"There'th thomething," she lisped, flushing painfully with embarrassment, "that I think Frankie ought to know. About Jenny."

She patted her sister's arm proudly. From the bottom of her gentle heart she admired and loved Jenny.

"Something Frank ought to know!" repeated Motherkin, wonderingly. "Why, what is it, Nancy?"

"Now, you stop!" cried Jenny, with something of her old-time haste and loudness of tone.

But Nancy shook her head.

"No, I won't thtop, either!" she said. "I thaw you, Jenny Kent, and I don't care if you like it or not,—I'm going to tell!"

She paused and looked from Jenny to Frank, and back again.

"Jenny," she said, "hath been doing Frankie'th lethonth for him, without any one knowing it!"

And Jenny had!

Whenever she had had a chance, she had slyly corrected a sum, or changed a letter, or turned down a leaf in a book, or left little pencil marks on maps that he hardly noticed but that made it easy to find capes and rivers and capitals and that sort of thing. She had been so careful that Frank had never caught her, and whenever he could not help seeing that the lessons were coming right without much help from him, he had decided it must be the Fairies who were helping him. And all the time it was Jenny!

With the wonder and gratitude that filled his heart came a most dreadful deep shame. Jenny had done that for him, out of kindness and warmheartedness, because studies were easier for her than for him. And what had he done for her?

He had played a silly, cowardly trick upon her.

The thought of his own meanness made him choke, and he looked so odd that Auntie Sue exclaimed in alarm:

"My dearest boy, what is the matter?"

And then Frank told what he had done the day of the hunt for the "Pot o' Gold." He didn't try to excuse himself; he made it just as horrid and shameful as it really had been. And he ended up humbly and miserably:

"If you can think of anything to do to punish me, Jenny, I wish you'd please do it, or tell me what I shall do."

Jenny burst out laughing, and shook his hand hard, just as a boy might have done.

"Nonsense!" she cried. "I don't want you to be punished, Frankie!"

"I think," said Mr. Kent, smiling, "that he's probably been punished enough, having won the tricycle unfairly, in having to keep it!— How about it, old chap?"

Frank looked at him, deeply grateful for so much understanding and sympathy.

"It's been simply awful!" he said solemnly. "I've wanted to go out and smash that tricycle every single day!"

"Well, why don't you?" said Jenny, laughing again. "We'll smash

it together the first thing to-morrow, and have a bonfire, and pop corn!"

"Dear me!" said dear Motherkin. "What a lot of crying and laughing there has been! And what a lot of mysteries we have cleared up! There was the puzzle of Santa Claus and his Messengers; and then Margot's Surprise Doll for Jenny; and Jenny's doing regular Fairy work to help Frank; and poor Frank himself being so brave and honest, and telling the truth about what he had done,—and—and—I think that's all!"

"Not quite all," said Auntie Sue, and she looked at Motherkin. "There is one more mystery,—isn't there?"

And then, as Mrs. Kent did not speak at once, she added: "I think—you—know what I mean,—don't you?"

Motherkin looked troubled, and very, very sweet. She put out both her hands and clasped Auntie Sue's.

"I think— Oh, you dear, dear woman,—I think I do!" she said.

The Wind came singing over the sea,
And his arms were full of gifts for me;
Gifts of flowers, and gifts of gold,
And dreams and tales that could never be told:
The Wind left all his gifts with me,
And sang his way to the restless sea.

The Wind came back, and oh, I was glad
To see his wings, and the burden he had;
For he carried a Gift and flung it down,
And I knew he had brought my one heart's-crown.
Then he turned away to the singing sea,
And said, "You have no more need of me!"

The Wind's Gifts.

CHAPTER XV

AUNTIE SUE AND THE LONELY WITCH

OW," said Auntie Sue, half way between laughing and crying, "I am going to tell a story! It-it is a queer sort of story," she added, looking at Motherkin as though she wanted her to help her out, and didn't know just how, "but it's true;-at leastves, it's true!

"Once there was an old-" again Auntie Sue hesitated,- "an old Witch, who lived in a big, dull, dark Castle, all by herself. She was quite alone, except for the grey old Goblins that served her, and the East Wind.

"She didn't do any harm, this old Witch, but she didn't do any good either, and she was terribly bored. All she had to do, in the long hours, was to spin dreams, and just as fast as she spun them the damp, cold East Wind that used to come and visit her in the Castle tore them in shreds and carried them off somewhere, before he flew out of the window laughing at her disappointment. She never could seem to keep any dream after she had made it. And she was unhappy, and cross, and so lonely that she wanted to cry. But she was such a lazy old thing that she couldn't even cry!

"And one day she just tipped over her spinning wheel on purpose, and said, 'What's the use of spinning dreams when the East Wind tears them up as fast as I finish them? I shan't spin any more!'

"And after that, she sat down and did nothing but feel sorry for herself." And the East Wind did nothing but laugh at her; for he was a disagreeable fellow, and most disrespectful. And the dust gathered on the spinning wheel, and the Goblin servants grew so aged and thin and faded that they turned into shadows at last,—at least, that's the way they looked to the Lonely Witch. And she used to wonder how long it would take her to turn into a shadow herself.

"Now the East Wind was, as I have said, an unpleasant sort of creature; but after a while even he began to feel a bit sorry for the Witch. At first, you see, he thought that she was just sulking, and more lazy even than usual, but in time he got somewhat worried about her, and set himself to thinking what he could do to cheer her up.

"One spring day, he came into the room where she sat with the unused spinning wheel beside her, and he blew the dust away.

"'Spin a new dream,' he said to her. 'Spin one about the green trees and L

the cowslips, and the birds that are building nests in the ivy and the locusts outside.—'"

"Did the Witch's castle have ivy?" cried Frank eagerly. "And locusts outside too?"

Auntie Sue nodded.

"Just like ours!" he exclaimed, much pleased. "Do go on, Auntie Sue!"

So she went on, with one hand on Frank's shoulder:

"You would think that the Lonely Witch would have liked to spin such

a pretty dream as that, but she only scowled, and said in reply:

"'I've spun dozens of those when I was still a young Witch. They didn't last any time at all;—you know why! And I don't doubt at all that if I should spin them again now, you'd start tearing them up, just the way you used to! No: I'm through, East Wind. Go away!"

"Then the East Wind scolded her, and went rushing up the chimney to dance on the roof and think of something new to arouse the poor, bad-tempered, lonely old Witch. After a while he came back to her.

"T've a very good idea for you to spin a dream out of now," he told her. It's a dream about travel and foreign countries, and all sorts of wonderful things in all sorts of wonderful places. How would you like that?"

"'I'm too old,' said the Lonely Witch impatiently. 'Dreams only make you want the real thing, and I'm too old, I tell you, and too stiff for travelling. I don't enjoy my broomstick the way I used to. Do go away and don't bother me any more, East Wind.'

"But the East Wind did not feel like giving up even then. He went out through the window, and played a tune on the leaves of the biggest locust tree in the garden. (Yes, Frank, dear; it was just like our garden, and just like one of our locust trees."

"I 'spect you put it in on purpose, like the ivy!" said the boy, smiling. (And she said, "Yes, Frank, dear!" again.)

"And while he played the tune on the leaves, the East Wind was thinking hard. And after he had thought and thought and thought, a new notion came to him, and back he blustered in a great hurry. And he caught hold of the Lonely Witch as she sat by herself by the dusty spinning wheel, and shook her roughly.

"'Wake up!' he said, in his sharpest tone. 'If you won't spin a dream for yourself, I'll spin it for you!'

"And he sat down by the spinning wheel, and began to spin. And what

do you suppose he spun? A dream about the sea, which was something he knew a very, very great deal about.

"And as he spun, the threads on the spindle grew green and blue and white like waves, and got loose and floated about the room; and there was a salt, sharp smell in the air,—just a whiff of it, but strong enough to make the Lonely Witch sit up straight and take a long, deep breath.

"'I think I should like to keep that one,' she said at last, when the East Wind had stopped spinning and the dream was complete. 'I'll start out for the sea to-day.—And since you are so obstinate,' she snapped, 'I'll take your Dream along with me, and see if it is as like the sea as it seems to be!'

"So she hunted up her broomstick,—she hadn't used it for years, and she didn't find it very comfortable when she first got on,—and the East Wind, with a great roar of laughter, sent her flying off to the ocean."

Just here Auntie Sue paused, as if she did not quite know how to go on. Again she looked at Mrs. Kent with an odd, anxious expression, and Frank thought that her hand pressed his shoulder a little more nervously than before.

"You all know the sea," she went on, as though it were not very easy after all to tell this story, even though it was true. "You know how wonderful it is, how it can make anything possible, just as if it were made of nothing but magic. I think the East Wind may have talked to the Sea Fairies about the Lonely Witch; he had plenty of intimate friends among them. And I think the Sea Fairies felt sorry for her, too. They can be very sympathetic when they like, you know, though, of course, they are changeable, and some of them are strong and terrible and cruel.

"Anyway, they got to talking with the Lonely Witch, while she sat on the shore with the new Dream in her lap. The East Wind had not torn this Dream, but after a while it faded, and one day it vanished quite away. But the Lonely Witch did not care so much, because she had the real ocean now, and did not have to look at any dream of it. And the Sea Fairies came every day and whispered to her.

"They were forever promising her something perfectly wonderful, but they would not tell her what it was to be, nor how it would come, nor how long she would have to wait for it. She used to wonder, in her heart of hearts, if it could be a Soul!

"You know all Witches, even the horrid, sour-natured ones, have a great longing to get a soul. Lots of Fairy people have, both good and bad. But the Lonely Witch had given up all hope of that long years and years before. That is, until the Fairies began to promise her mysterious gifts; and even then she did not dare really to believe that there would be among them a Soul! For after all, what had she ever done to earn or to deserve a soul?

"One night a great storm came up out of the middle of the ocean, and the East Wind went out to join the other Winds in a wild dance among the waves.

"Sometimes the Winds seem to go mad for a time, and while they are crazy they do terrible things. But when they are calm again they nearly always forget everything that they have done. Once in a while a Wind will remember a ship that he has wrecked or some one he has drowned, or a tidal wave which he has helped along until it flooded a whole sea-side town. And then he is very unhappy and sorry; and that is why the Wind sometimes sings so sadly at night. It means that he is restless and cannot sleep for thinking of the harm that he has done.

"And the night of the great storm, the Sea Fairies came almost up onto the shore, and called excitedly to the Lonely Witch where she sat indoors far up the beach.

"'Come down! Come down to us!' they cried. 'Something is going to

happen! Come down and see!"

"She did not go down, though they kept calling her all the long night through; but when the dawn broke she walked slowly down to the shore and looked at the tossing waves.

"The East Wind passed her. He was very tired and all his wild spirits had died down, so that now he moved very slowly as though at the end of his strength.

"When the Lonely Witch came to the beach, the Sea Fairies called once more to her as they slipped back into the dark-green, thunder-making water:

"'See! See what we have left for you, Lonely Witch who need never be lonely any more! See—see—see—' And then their voices died away in the noise of the waves, and she never heard them again.

"She stood on the beach, the Lonely Witch, and people were running about and talking and crying. They told her, when she asked a question, that a ship had gone down in the night in sight of land. Brave men had done their best to rescue those who had been on board, but nobody at all had been saved except—except—"

Auntie Sue hesitated again, and to the children's surprise, big tears began to roll slowly down her cheeks.

"-Except," she went on speaking softly, "a very, very little child. It

had been tied to something, so that it could not sink, and the brave men who were trying to rescue the people on the ship found it, and brought it ashore. I think—I think it was the Spirits of the Sea, or perhaps some stronger Spirit still, who must have pointed that baby out to the life-saving men,—don't you? For it was so very tiny, and the piece of wood to which it was tied was floating about on the big waves among ever so many other pieces of wood that looked just the same.

"At any rate, there it was, small and soft, and with big, big, brown eyes. And it was so cold and frightened that it was crying as if its baby heart would break. And the first moment she looked at it, the Lonely Witch knew that this was the Gift that the Sea Spirits had promised her.

"So she took the child away with her, away from the sea, and back to her chilly, dull, dingy old Castle. And she found that it really was, just as she had supposed from the first, a true Fairy Child; for as soon as it came inside the dark Castle doorway, the whole place began to shine and shine, until it did not look one bit the way it had been looking during all those lonely years.

"And then, all at once, the Witch had the strangest feeling, as though something inside her heart were breaking, or melting,—she did not quite know what it was; and—suddenly she knew just what was happening to her: she wasn't a Lonely Witch any more. She had gotten a Soul at last, and become human!"

Auntie Sue choked, but went right on,—more eagerly now, as if she could hardly wait to get to the end of the story.

"Being a human woman at last," she continued breathlessly, "one of the first things she did was to do some house-cleaning! The Castle had been neglected for years, and not all the sweeping of the Goblin servants had been able to keep the dust from settling, and the rust from growing, and everything going to rack and ruin pretty much as it pleased. It was almost as though no one had been living there at all. But, now that the Fairy Child had come to live there, the Witch went to work with a splendid new broom, and she got new brooms for all the Goblins, and the East Wind who in the old days used to make more trouble for them all, came in from time to time to help, and the walls of the Castle seemed to be made of gold and silver, they were so beautifully polished up!

"And what do you suppose she found in an old closet? A great heap of coloured rags, that filled the closet to overflowing, and reached nearly as high as the ceiling. When she opened the door, a lot of them fell out into the

light, and as she looked at them, she thought that they had a familiar appearance.

"'Now why did I save those rags?' she said to the East Wind who was in the room. 'They are very pretty, to be sure—there is a lovely blue bit, and that pink scrap is as good as new; but they would be of no use for anything but a patchwork quilt. Now why did I put them away so carefully?'

"At that the East Wind spoke up.

"'You didn't save them at all,' he said. 'I did.'

"'But what are they?' she asked, much amazed.

"'They are the rags and tatters of all your old dreams,' he replied, 'the dreams that you spent so many years spinning, and that I tore up so unkindly. You believed I threw them away, and I was almost thoughtless enough for that; but I used to feel sorry for you sometimes, so instead of letting them all blow away, I gathered them together, and hid them here. I thought that some day you might, as you say, want to make a patchwork quilt of them.'

"But the Witch had a better idea than that!

"The Fairy Child was sitting near the open window trying to catch sunbeams; sometimes he would succeed, too, and laugh with pleasure, for he was a Fairy Child, and they can catch even sunbeams once in a while. And the Witch who was not a Lonely Witch any more, gathered up an armful of the torn-up shreds of her old dreams, and carried them over to him in the sunshine.

"'Now, my darling,' she said, 'you shall have a rainbow bed to lie on,—made all out of the dreams I used to make, sitting here by myself! I've often wondered why I tried to spin so many dreams in the old days; now I know! It was to make a soft place for you to lie on!

"And the Fairy Child lay on the bed of dreams in the sunshine, and laughed, and the Lonely Witch who was not lonely any more laughed, and all the old Goblins laughed and even the East Wind laughed. . . . And it was you, my dearest dear little boy,—the Fairy Child was you!"

And crying as though her heart would break, but laughing through her tears all the time, Auntie Sue caught Frank in her arms, and held him tight.

For you see she had been telling her own story, in the form of a Fairy tale. The Lonely Witch was Auntie Sue.

Perhaps you have been clever enough to guess that long ago, as Auntie

Sue and Motherkin had guessed it. But in any case you probably will want to know more about it.

Frank was indeed the little nephew whom Mr. and Mrs. Kent had believed drowned at sea. He was none other than Margot's lost twin brother! And Mrs. Kent was his really-truly aunt, and Auntie Sue was no relation at all. The Grown-Ups had seen from the first how much the little boy and girl were alike, but it was only when Auntie Sue heard of the child who had been lost at sea that it came to her with a shock that the baby boy she had found and adopted might be the very one whose family had been mourning him as dead.

It was easy for Auntie Sue to talk about the Lonely Witch, for she had had a great deal of trouble, and had no one belonging to her, and Frank had been as dear to her as if he had been her very own child. When Mrs. Kent talked to her, and gave her dates and names and places, and showed her a picture of Frank taken with Margaret just before that voyage, she realised that it was without doubt the very same baby.

But poor Auntie Sue was so wretched at the thought of giving Frank up to any one,—even a real aunt,—that for a long time she did not say a word about it to a soul, though in her heart she had felt that Mrs. Kent knew. Every day she had gone about in terror lest it be found out, and the boy taken away from her.

"But I've waked up!" she said, with big tears rolling down her cheeks. "I know I have no right to keep him. I am a stupid old woman, and it is wicked to keep him from a—a family,—and his own family, at that!"

Frank tucked his hand into hers, and cuddled his head against her arm. He was smiling happily at his newly-found sister and cousins, and at Motherkin,—how funny and lovely to think that she belonged to him now, just as much as to Margaret!

But his eyes came back to Auntie Sue, and he squeezed her hand harder. "Auntie—" he began.

"I'm not your Auntie!" she exclaimed, crying and laughing and scolding all at once. "I'm nothing but a poor, old, Lonely Witch!"

"Wait," said Mr. Kent gravely. "Let the boy have time to think it over."

Everybody looked at Frank, as though they expected him to make some sort of a choice. He thought it mean of them. But if it came to a matter of choosing, why—

"I think it's very nice to have two Aunties!" he announced, as though that settled the matter,—as to be sure it did,—"and I want them both,—every day!"



Children love the Little Folk,
Goblin, Dwarf and Fay,
Elves of brook, and flower, and oak,—
But ah! They fly away!
It is sad we cannot bind
The friendly sprites to stay,
But, my dears, you mustn't mind,
For, believe me, you can find
Fairy things of every kind
'Round you every day.

We can seldom go to dances
In a Fairy Land,
Where the magic moonlight glances
O'er the Elfin band;
But when summer sunshine lies
On the daisies gay,—
Listen to my counsel wise:—
If you look with half your eyes
You may see the butterflies
Dancing every day.

We can only go a-diving
Once in a great while,—
With strange ocean monsters striving,
Mile on emerald mile;
But you always have a spell,—
Now hark to what I say!—
If you'll take a big sea-shell,
Close your eyes and listen well,
You may hear it sing and tell
Of wonders every day.

Now, I wonder if last night
It was really true
That I saw the Pixies bright
Dancing in the dew?
Were they but dreams, the glow-worm's gleams,—
The chats with Troll and Fay?
I don't care! When morning beams,
And shadows fade, it really seems
As nice to recollect the dreams,
On waking every day!

Every Day.

CHAPTER XVI

FRANK'S DREAM

HAT night, Frank had a dream,—just a dream, this time. It did not even seem real; he knew quite well that it was a dream, and that if he tried hard enough he could wake up at any moment. But, half awake, and half asleep, he lingered on in the dream. . . . He dreamed that he was surrounded by Fairies—regular Fairies such as

He dreamed that he was surrounded by Fairies,—regular Fairies, such as Mortals so seldom see, though they are so often close to seeing them. And they were just as Fairies should be, with rainbow draperies, and bright wings, and tiny stars on their foreheads. And they danced and sang and flew about him in shining, misty rings. He could only hear a few words of their song, but the refrain was something like this:

... "Child, this Fairy company Only in your dreams you'll see!"

They sang that over and over again. And they danced faster and faster until Frank dreamed that he grew dizzy watching them. Then—in the dream—something strange happened. The Fairies were still there, but they were different, and they were dancing more slowly, so that it was easy to look at them and did not hurt his eyes nor make his head swim any more.

And now they were not like Fairy-Tale Fairies, but Every-Day Fairies, such as Frank had grown friendly with during the last months. There, right before him, were the Shadows, the Beetles, the Sea Gull, the Mouse, and—Jack-in-the-Box, come to life at last! There were all the People of the Library,—the Books and Candle-Sticks, and the little Clock Man; there were a hundred every-day Sprites that he had grown used to noticing in his ordinary life. And, laughing, and nodding to him in the friendliest manner possible, they were singing:

"Simple Fairies such as we
Will always bear you company;
If you love us, you will learn
We'll comfort you at every turn,
And be your friends, where'er you stray,—
We little Elves of Every Day"

And that was all that Frank could ever remember of the dream.

A LAST WORD

The Grown Up People have the queerest way
Of thinking what they guess is always right;
They wake, and in the cheerful light of day
Explain to you just what you did all night.
No matter what you know, they smile at you,
And wisely tell you all you didn't do!

When Sprites and Phantoms rise and hover near,
And things occur that only you can see,
'Twill never be found out,—you needn't fear,—
No matter how much reason there may be.
The stupidest Grown Up in the world events
Some explanation—which he calls Good Sense!

If you go riding on the Wind at night,
And dead leaves cling about the clothes you wore,
Isn't it funny, when, at full daylight,
Nurse thinks that they were blown in on the floor?
"Mercy!" she cries. "See all these leaves about!
Quick,—I must shut this dreadful tempest out!"

When with the frogs you've had a midnight tea,
And tracked the rug with mud, and mould, and ooze,
The Grown Ups say, "Oh, what a mess! Just see;
The girl last night forgot to clean his shoes!"
As if you didn't know much more than that!
Truly, it is a thing to wonder at.

And if you're frightened by the Scary Folk,
The Brownie, and the Goblin, and the Kelp,
And try to fight them off, and gasp and choke,
And sit up in the bed, and call for help,—
Mother and Granny come with soothing strain:
"It was a dream, dear; go to sleep again!"

I truly cannot understand at all
Why they can never see nor ever find
The traces that the Fairy Ones let fall,
But always seem so dull, and deaf, and blind.
They laugh: "You saw a Bogie? No, no, no!"
Well, never mind; the children know it's so!

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